The New REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion

VOL. LI NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 1927 NUMBER 655

Contents

The Week 107

Editorials
- Sea Power at Geneva 109
- The Subways of New York 112

General Articles
- Disarmament—a Warning ..... Sisley Huddleston 114
- The Horn (verse) ..... Léonie Adams 116
- Confessions of a College Dean 117
- What Other Shield? (verse) ..... Witter Bynner 119
- In Dedham Jail ..... Bruce Bliven 120
- The Theater Season ..... Stark Young 122
- Flood-Water ..... Hamilton Basso 123
- A Chekhov Miscellany ..... Robert Littell 124

Correspondence 125

Reviews of Books
- Dragons in the Path ..... Lyman Bryson 127
- Romanticism, Classicism, Realism ..... Robert Morss Lovett 128
- The High Cost of Distribution ..... Ordway Tead 129
- The "Top Talker" ..... R. L. 129
- Unfused Allegory ..... Lawrence S. Morris 130
- F. M. Ford's Poems ..... B. D. 131
- Vagabondia ..... Conrad Aiken 131
- Four O'Clock ..... E. H. W. 132

The Week

IN New York City on Monday, June 13 the only parader on the streets who was not a little crazy about Charles Lindbergh was apparently Lindbergh himself. The various newspapers, with their usual accuracy, estimated the number of people who witnessed the parade as participating spectators at anywhere from 2,000,000 to 7,500,000. It seems clear, at all events, that the crowd broke all records for its numbers and for its generous and good-natured enthusiasm. New York had evidently taken a huge resolve. At any cost it would wipe out the humiliation of having failed to receive the national hero when he landed, by staging a greeting for him which would make his previous receptions look cheap and second-rate. In celebrating Lindbergh's return with such a lavish expenditure of popular enthusiasm, the people of New York were also vindicating their own importance. Their welcome was, of course, the expression of a lively, sincere and practically universal liking for the young man and admiration for his exploit, but it was also clearly stimulated and exaggerated by competition. New York insisted on cheering longer and louder than Paris, London or Washington. The crowd used to the limit the opportunity of being enthusiastic about Lindbergh in order to confer honor and distinction upon itself.

IT is regrettable that the element of competitive exploitation was allowed to cheapen the heart-felt popular response which Lindbergh's beautiful flight has aroused. It all began with the way in which his time was managed by his advisers in Paris. The competition was started by selecting Brussels and London for him rather than several other places, instead of returning him directly to American soil. Since then, every country, every city, every business, every individual and every cause which saw any opportunity of exploiting his popularity have done it to the best of their ability. Even radicals have proposed to cover their opponents with shame and confusion by advertising the fact that Charles Lindbergh's father revealed in his public career anti-capitalist and pacifist tendencies. In what way radicalism is recommended or Toryism is discredited by this discovery we are unable to see. A Tory could with perfect consistency celebrate the exploit of the son and despise the record of the father. Even if Charles Lindbergh the aviator should suddenly announce himself as a convert to the platform of the League for Industrial Democracy, industrial democrats would have no reason to rejoice or Tories to mitigate their affectionate enthusiasm for himself and his performance. It is the part of his best friends to love him and to leave him alone.

THE results which were predicted when Great Britain severed relations with Russia have followed with time-table punctuality. The Soviet government believes that the move has heartened the counter-revolutionists, and in proof of this, points to three things: the murder of M. Voikoff, Minister to Poland, by a young Russian Monarch-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ist, Boris Korenko; a bomb explosion in a Communist club in Leningrad which injured twenty-six persons; and the death of a secret-service official, in a street-car accident, while bound for Minsk. The chances are that at least two of these incidents had no connection with counter-revolution; the bomb outrage may have been a reprisal by professional criminals against the judges whose chambers were on the next floor; and the trolley smash could easily have been a genuine accident. But if Moscow believes that the Tsarist forces are stirring again, aided by London, the results are about as serious as if this were in fact true.

IN the present instance, the consequences have been sickening. The Moscow government has gathered in a large number of supposed opponents, and has shot twenty-one of them. Fourteen of these were charged with various counter-revolutionary activities, one of them having been caught in the act of seeking to bomb Bukharin. The other seven were charged with being, in one way or another, in the pay of the British government. No one outside Moscow can know to what extent these twenty-one persons were guilty of the crimes for which they have been punished with such terrible severity. But we may fairly assume that were it not for the new atmosphere produced by the action of the British government—accompanied as it was by a sudden anti-Red wave in France, the United States, and elsewhere—some, at least, of these executions would not have taken place. By the atmosphere of fear, suspicion and hatred which has again been created, the recent achievements of Europe looking toward peace and good will have been jeopardized most dangerously.

THE prospect grows darker and darker for the payment of the large total of German reparations which will fall due in 1928. The recent report of the Reparations Agent shows that Germany now has, and for some months back has had, a large surplus of imports over exports. Without an export surplus, the only way reparations can be transferred is in gold. But gold cannot be paid out indefinitely, without reducing the bank reserves to dangerous limits and imperiling the currency. Germany has been able to finance the import surplus largely by means of the loans she received in this country and elsewhere last year. But these loans have now nearly ceased flowing. Without more loans from abroad and without the imported materials which they pay for, German productivity and standards of living will probably suffer. Can the belt be squeezed enough further to produce the large export surplus essential to reparations transfers? Hardly. In the meantime, the report points out that heavy expenditures by the government of the Reich have led to an unbalance of the budget which is rectified only by borrowing. Thus the main source of reparations payments is drying up—aside from the transfer difficulties. To restore the surplus would mean a vigorous curtailment of expenses, which in turn would lower German standards.

IT appears that Poincaré's new loan of 10,000,000,000 francs is not to be such a financial triumph as was at first thought. That the French government can borrow more money, instead of having to pay maturing obligations in cash, is, of course, a testimony of renewed confidence. But the important point is the use to which the money is to be put, its effect on the currency and on the budget. The first statement left the impression that, because the loan was to be utilized to pay off part of the advance made by the Bank of France to the government, it would lead to the retirement of an equivalent amount of currency, and thus provide a further step in deflation and the recovery of the franc. It is now announced that no contraction of the currency is contemplated. The chief object of the loan is to substitute a long-term obligation for advances from the Bank, and thus to diminish the political effect of the charge that the Poincaré government is hopelessly in pawn to the bankers and must do their bidding. There will be little change for the better in the debt charges on the budget, and little or no influence on the franc. In fact, the loan is in one sense discouraging, for it is an admission that not enough surplus of current receipts over expenditures is in sight to make substantial repayments of the Bank's advances without further borrowing.

DAVID Gordan, a young poet of eighteen, was sentenced on June 10 to the New York Reformatory. His offence was the publication in the Daily Worker of an allegedly obscene satiric poem about the United States. Gordan was born in Russia, but, by virtue of the fact that he was a minor when his father became naturalized, is himself an American citizen. His parents are working people and poor. The lines objected to in his poem liken America to a brothel, in which the workers sell their integrity for American prosperity and success. Gordan tried to explain in court that his poem had been written under the influence of Carnevali. He might have invoked the precedent of a greater Italian poet:

> Ahi, serva Italia, di dolore ostello.
> Nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta,
> Non donna di provincie, ma bordello!

But it is improbable that the name of Dante would have made on the judges who sentenced him any more impression than the name of Carnevali. When Gordan pointed out that some animadversions on the Statue of Liberty in the same poem—a passage irrelevant to the charge of obscenity, but as to the intention of which the Court did not fail to examine him—had been inspired by some remarks of Bernard Shaw on the same subject, it was merely suggested that he was also guilty of plagiarism. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

misdemeanor for which Gordan was convicted (under Section 1141 of the Penal Law: the Obscenity Statute) is tried, not before a jury, but by a special session of judges. One of these magistrates expressed the regret that he was unable to send Gordan back to Russia; and another intimated that, if he were older, he would be sentenced to the penitentiary. He will now serve in the reformatory, among pickpockets, dope-fiends and sneak-thieves, a term which, unless the reformatory authorities are prevailed upon to relent, may last until he comes of age, three years. In the meantime, this young Russian immigrant will have had an even more intimate experience of the free institutions of this land of opportunity, and will no doubt find himself in a position to devote his literary gifts to the expression of even more intense convictions.

SENATOR Smoot now knows how it feels to be a Washington correspondent. He had a talk with President Coolidge last week, after which he announced positively that Congress would be called in special session at least a month and a half befor the regular time for assembling. As soon as the President heard this bit of news, he issued a categorical denial, leaving Senator Smoot, as he so often leaves the newspaper men, to look foolish and say nothing. The Senator ought to be too old a bird to be caught in such an obvious trap. There is no doubt that the President told him of the plan for a special session. But he should have known that the first announcement must be an official one and that any premature disclosure is bound to be repudiated.

IN view of the pressing problem before the country, a meeting in October is better than one in December; and the former date is quite early enough to consider the question of permanent relief from floods. But how can a session of Congress four months hence aid the 100,000 victims of the late disaster, many of whom have lost everything they have in the world? The Red Cross funds have been expended only to satisfy immediate necessities, for food and clothing and temporary shelter. How are the sufferers to buy seed (which must be planted in the next few weeks if at all)? To obtain work animals, cattle, machinery? To repair houses, barns, roads? A loan system has been set up with present resources of $1,500,000 and for this another $2,000,000 is being sought, with dubious prospects of success. Owing to rediscount privileges, the effectiveness of this sum is quadrupled, to a final maximum of $14,000,000. Does anyone believe that $14,000,000 can rehabilitate more than half a million people? Does the President? And if not, upon what other resources does he propose to rely?

THE United States is technically right, and Canada morally right, in the dispute about aliens who live across the line at Windsor, but enter this country daily to work at Detroit. Under the immigration law, as our government has tardily decided, they must be treated as quota immigrants of their respective nations. But in fact, as Canada points out in last week's spirited note, they are not immigrants unless they change their domicile, which these persons (of whom there are several thousand, mostly British) have no desire to do. The recently promulgated regulations do not go into effect until next December. It is to be hoped and expected that, before then, some *modus vivendi* will have been arrived at. After all, the good-will of Canada is ten times as important as a rigid execution of a narrowly legalistic rule.

MR. McADOO'S speech last week on states' rights and prohibition was unworthy of him. The Eighteenth Amendment does not conflict with the rights of states, he said, because (a) they have equal power with the federal government to enforce prohibition within their borders, and (b) rights not reserved by the states fall to the federal authority. This, we submit, is mere word juggling. A state which is opposed to prohibition is not consoled by sharing with Washington the responsibility of enforcement; indeed, several of them have repealed their dry laws and left Uncle Sam to do the work alone. Similarly, a state which has always opposed the Amendment cannot be persuaded that yielding to it is the highest expression of states' rights merely because, before the national law was passed, dry states were annoyed by smuggling across the border from wet neighbors. There is a case for national prohibition as being desirable in spite of, as a necessary exception to, the doctrine of states' rights, and Mr. McAdoo might easily have made it. But he spoke in Georgia, which wants both prohibition and sentimental loyalty to local autonomy.

Sea Power at Geneva

THE naval disarmament conference at Geneva is called to deal with less important matters than the congress which assembled in Washington in the fall of 1921. The world of international politics in June, 1927, is far from being a model of order, but it is more orderly than it was six years ago; and the Washington conference of 1921, notwithstanding its limited success, is in part responsible for the improvement. It settled, for the time being, certain vexed and anxious questions about the future of sea power both in the Atlantic and in the Pacific. It proved that the English-speaking peoples in the one region in which their interests and policies might have been considered seriously to conflict were sufficiently considerate of one another not to allow a conflict to occur; and it ruled out, consequently, the danger that, as a result of the British Empire's success in securing the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assistance of the United States in winning a victory over Germany, it had created a more formidable rival than Germany to dispute its over-lordship of the seas. The confidence of the United States and Great Britain in each other's good faith is an indispensable bulwark of the peace of the world. The conference which is now being held in Geneva is really intended to confirm their agreement—that is, to improve the technical method which their statesmen have invented to render it effective.

There is room for improvement. If the three most formidable naval powers have eschewed competition in the building of battleships, it seems absurd not to attempt a further reduction of the number, the size and the expense of these now useless monsters. Of even more importance is an agreement among them to restrict the construction of the one major class of fighting and scouting ships which was omitted from the agreement of 1921—viz., the cruisers. During the last five years, the British government has built them at a rapid rate. In the event of a collision between the navies of the two countries, its superiority in this respect would give the British a considerable, if not a decisive, advantage over the United States. It has not violated the letter of the Washington agreement, but it has certainly taken advantage of its only opportunity to substitute a preponderant British sea power for one which was to have been divided fifty-fifty with this country. Unless the two governments reach some agreement as to joint restriction, it will be impossible to prevent American navalists from starting to build cruisers in competition with Great Britain. We devoutly hope, consequently, that they will not fail to agree. The two nations cannot afford to transfer to the construction of cruisers the race for supremacy which formerly existed or was threatened in the matter of battleships.

It is a matter of the utmost importance for the British Empire, the United States and the whole world that the three chief naval powers should continue and develop the amicable arrangement of 1921 about the distribution of sea power. They agreed at that time to share the possession of capital ships in the ratio of five for Great Britain, five for the United States and three for Japan. This arrangement meant substantially that, in place of British naval superiority throughout the waters of the world, as it had existed during the nineteenth century, there would be substituted a three-fold supremacy. The British fleet, which in essential strength would be no more than equal to that of the American fleet, would be supreme in the European Atlantic, in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean. The American fleet would be supreme in the American waters both of the Atlantic and the Pacific. The somewhat smaller Japanese fleet would be supreme in those Pacific waters which broke upon the Asiatic continent. The three fleets would be powerful enough to prevent any attack from any other fleet on their own harbors and shores, but they would not be powerful enough to carry on an aggressive war against the harbors and shores of the other sea powers. The arrangement put an end to the possibility of invasion of the United States from Asia or Europe, or of Japan from the United States or Europe. It guaranteed Japan and the United States, in the event of war with another naval power, against being blockaded, as was the South during the Civil War, and Germany during the World War. Great Britain remained more exposed in this respect, but only because she is economically more dependent on foreign trade with the entire world. She too was safeguarded against a blockade of her own ports. It was a plan which prevented the seas from being used for major aggressive military operations except with the consent of at least two of the three naval powers.

This allocation of sea power was, of course, a radical departure from that which prevailed during the nineteenth century. From 1815 until about 1910, the British fleet was supreme. Any political or military operations which required the transportation of troops by water over long distances demanded the active or passive consent of the British government. Towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the cost of maintaining a fleet which was supreme in all the waters of the world began to strain British resources. The British government, consequently, entered into an alliance with Japan in order to limit its naval liabilities in the Far East. Later it concentrated a large part of its sea power in the North Sea in order to meet the German menace, and it was obliged to turn the Mediterranean over to the French fleet, itself assuming the responsibility for protecting the French coasts on the Atlantic. These mitigations of the undivided supremacy of the British fleet were, however, unimportant in substance. That supremacy was unquestioned until, during the World War, the fleet of the United States, at least in capital ships, had attained approximately the same size as that of Great Britain.

The present distribution of sea power among one European, one American and one Asiatic country is prudent and more wholesome than its former concentration. They should continue it until some wider and less arbitrary distribution is possible. The British supremacy served a desirable purpose during the nineteenth century and its record is on the whole creditable to the nation which exercised it, but it has outlived its usefulness. There is no good reason to revive it. It formed a keystone to the pre-war international political order which was interested chiefly in trying to stabilize an unstable balance of power in Europe and in safeguarding the imperialist aggression of European nations at the expense of less politically developed peoples in Asia and Africa.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The major assumption and the major vice of British navalism was its unmitigated and innocently arrogant Europeanism. From its point of view, civilization, in the sense of meritorious political aggrandizement, was a prerogative of European nations, America being essentially a group of European colonies. The interests of peoples who lived on inferior continents were properly subordinated to those of the European peoples. The European interest, as the British saw it, consisted first, in an approximate balance of military power among the states of continental Europe, and, secondly, in the maintenance of a British naval superiority. It was particularly important that the British fleet should be superior to the fleet of any other nation or group of nations, which could also dispose of a dangerously strong army. As long as these conditions were observed, important aggressive military operations were impossible except by land, and any nation which threatened, as the result of such operations, to dominate the continent of Europe would have to reckon with the enmity of Great Britain. British policy, on the other hand, did nothing to discourage aggressive military operations against comparatively helpless peoples in Asia and Africa. The British Empire was itself the product of such operations, and when other European powers followed the British example they were, of course, acquiring possessions which they held, in a military sense, only with the consent of the commander of the British fleet.

This international system served to localize war for one hundred years, but it was certain in the end to result in a general European conflagration. The British government was laboring to maintain a balance among the several unstable and irresponsible sources of political energy in Europe without sufficiently considering the impact of their operations on Asia and America. The system would compel the British government sooner or later to throw all its own resources into the struggle to maintain the European equilibrium. Thereafter the part which it had played as regulator of the European international equilibrium would pass with fatal consequence to the whole system to some power outside of Europe. The time came in 1914.

The World War exposed pitilessly the weakness and inadequacy of the system of international politics which rested on the supremacy of British sea power. Its most momentous result was not the defeat of the Central Powers nor even the final exhaustion of the material and moral resources of the original belligerents, but the passing of Europe as the dominating center of modern political civilization. Europe was obliged to summon outside aid to its assistance in order to hew a way out of the forest of its illusions, mistakes and animosities. The Allies persuaded the United States to come in on their side by exploiting the remnants of American colonial psychology. They convinced the most influential part of American public opinion that the United States was paying a debt to civilization by intervening in a European quarrel for the benefit of one of two European interests. But their success in obtaining the coöperation of the United States brought with it results which were not contemplated by the intentions or the calculations of any of the people who were responsible for it. By introducing a non-European people as a major protagonist into the European political drama, it revolutionized the plot and the meaning of that sinister old tragedy. Thereafter Europe could no longer insist on being the center around which international political values revolved. America entered the European drama in the person of a nation which, in spite of the colonialism of its conscious motives, had without knowing it become too instinctively self-assertive to continue to play the part of an accomplice. As soon as the fighting was over, it reasserted an American egotism which was not content to subordinate the political interests of other continents to the maintenance of a lop-sided and unjust European peace.

By declining to sign the Versailles Treaty and by withdrawing from the League of Nations, the United States did not diminish its influence on European and world politics. It increased that influence by recovering its independence of action and outlook. Its economic power and its prestige were so great that, willy-nilly, no important decision could be taken without its consent. Yet, by withdrawing, it emancipated itself from its previous bondage to the policy of the Allies, which was concerned mainly with European interests or the colonial interests of European nations. It is for the benefit of Europe as well as of America and Asia that European governments are now obliged to reckon with the point of view, and even with the embarrassing selfishness and inertia, of a major non-European nation. For it gives to the equally selfish, but more contentious, European peoples a motive to combine in order to assert their common welfare, and it forces them to recognize that hereafter the people of other continents do not propose to exist chiefly in order to be exploited, governed or patted on the back by Europe.

The United States has from the beginning used what power it possessed in international politics to limit the efforts of European governments to convert the other continents into European dependencies. It began by ruling out North and South America as a field for further European colonization. Later it helped to prevent China from being parceled out among the European empires. In 1921 it broke up the alliance between Great Britain and Japan which was so dangerous to Chinese independence, and so comforting to both Japanese and British imperialism. As the result of the influence of the United States, China is free, for the time being, to carry on a constructive revolutionary upheaval without European or Japanese interference in the interest of "civilization."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For these reasons it is essential that the redistribution of sea power which was recognized by the Washington conference of 1921 should be confirmed by, and, if possible, rendered still more explicit by the Geneva Congress of 1927. As long as an American, an Asiatic and a European sea power all exist side by side, and independent of one another, European world imperialism, as it existed towards the end of the nineteenth century and as it was encouraged by British maritime supremacy, not only cannot recover its momentum, but is bound steadily to lose ground. The British imperialists are chafing under the limitation, and with the help of the Singapore base and their preponderance in commerce-destroying cruisers, they are trying to regain for the Empire a fraction of its former exceptional position. But the American representatives at Geneva will have every reason to insist on a confirmation of the principles which underlay the agreement of 1921 rather than a modification of it for the benefit of British sea power. The British behaved with admirable wisdom and forbearance in 1921 in recognizing that they had to share with Japan and the United States their former supremacy. They will, we hope, behave with similar forbearance and statesmanship in 1927.

The Subways of New York

WHATEVER may be sung of the sidewalks of New York, there could scarcely be a darker, duller, or dirtier subject than its subways. Yet, in spite of the wholesome desire to avoid them in this hot weather, Mr. Untermeyer's little investigation for the Transit Commission has brought out some old facts and some new ones which really deserve contemplation, not for their own sake, but for the education of a public which has more property to administer. Strange as it may seem to the uninitiate, the subways are owned in large part by the city, just as the water power on the Niagara and the St. Lawrence is owned by the state. And, just as the people of the state are now being urged to delegate to private capital the building and operation of the plants which are to utilize the state's water power, so the people of New York City, years ago, looked to private capital and private management to operate its vital transit system. Is not private management more efficient? Does it not avoid graft? Cannot public bodies make binding contracts with private ones, providing for rate regulation, recapture and all the rest, which will fully protect the public interest? Let us see.

To build the first subway, the city advanced money which it raised by a bond issue, but delegated the work to a contractor, who was also subsequently to equip and operate the lines. He was to sign a lease guaranteeing the bond interest plus 1 percent. The city was to have the right of recapture at the termination of the lease—which had a term of fifty years, with a twenty-five-year-renewal privilege. With certain unimportant changes, this arrangement became embodied in Contract No. 1. When the subway was extended to Brooklyn, Contract No. 2 was signed, with similar provisions. Could anything be fairer?

Soon afterward, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company—the operating concern—leased the elevated lines from the Manhattan Railway Company, thus gaining a monopoly of rapid transit in New York. The lease was for not less than 999 years, and bound the Interborough to pay not less than 7 percent dividends on the $60,000,000 capital stock of the Manhattan, the interest on its bonds, and organization expenses and taxes.

When still more subways became necessary in 1913, prolonged negotiations resulted in contract No. 3, which is still in force. The city was to advance more money for construction, and the Interborough was to contribute a large sum. The first charge against the earnings was to be for certain items to go to the company under the old and the new contracts—rental, guaranteed income, depreciation, taxes, and contributions toward construction charges. After that, the city would share the profits —if any. The new lease had a forty-nine-year term. The city could recapture the new lines after ten years. The old contracts were modified to expire at the same time as the new—with the important exception of the recapture privilege. Thus, if the city should take over the new lines, it could not take over the old ones until many years later, and the system would be split.

The guarantees of priority in income to the Interborough under Contract No. 3 were insisted upon by the bankers who financed the project.

At the same time, the city contracted with the B. M. T. for another system, in order to introduce some competition into the situation.

What is now shown to be the result of all these complex relationships?

The stockholders of the Interborough put in $21,620,000, and, between 1905 and 1919, drew out $65,625,000 in dividends—more than three times the value of the investment in fourteen years. The city invested $330,000,000, but, under Contract No. 3, has failed to receive any income for the interest or amortization of its bonds, and has had to meet these charges by taxation, to the tune of about $13,000,000 annually.

Last year, on a five-cent fare, the Interborough, as a result of its own operations, made a profit, after paying fixed charges, of 16 percent on its capital stock and 22 percent on the actual investment. The city, as noted above, got nothing. This was due to the 999-year lease of the elevated lines. It may be assumed that, if the Manhattan Company had not been overcapitalized, a five-cent fare would also have provided a profit for the elevated. As it is, the elevated has been losing ever since the War, and the contract with the Interborough drains the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

profits of the subway to protect the watered investment in the Manhattan—even though the rental has been lowered since the original lease.

Yet even if the Interborough should earn twice as much as it is making, the city could get nothing, because, under the company's priority in earnings, deficits have accumulated to the extent of $72,000,000, which would have to be paid. It is doubtful whether these deficits can ever be paid off, at the present fare.

Present Interborough stockholders are, of course, receiving nothing. But that does not mean that the original stockholders are not protected. Some years ago, they had the privilege—which the wise ones accepted—of trading in their stock at the rate of one share for $200 worth of bonds and other considerations. Thus they converted their uncertain dividends into a fixed charge which has to be paid before the city gets anything. This, too, is a cause of the city's loss.

Meanwhile the stock, now worth very little, has lost the interest of the public. Since no dividends are being paid on it, many of the actual owners are not recorded on the books of the company. The proxies of about 90 percent of the stock thus remain in the hands of brokers or financiers, and can be shopped out to any party interested in controlling the management.

That there is such a party is revealed by the fact that the B. M. T., its officers and other affiliated interests have bought large blocks of this worthless Interborough stock. The B. M. T. is supposed to be a competing company. Its contracts with the city allow an early recapture of the important parts of the system. It therefore does not have the city hog-tied, as does the Interborough. In the present negotiations with the city, which are designed to lead up to a unified system under proper control, the B. M. T. is in a comparatively weak position—unless it can participate in the Interborough's trading. What more simple than to do so by owning or controlling the Interborough?

This story, brief at best in comparison with the complexities of the subject, would rest too far from completion without reference to the subway's labor policy. Three struggles with the men have taken place—in 1906, 1916 and 1926. The second strike was converted by the employers into a lockout to destroy the regular union and to substitute for it an unaffiliated, company-controlled organization, which the employees are compelled to join. There has been much well grounded suspicion of collusion between the leading spirits of this organization and the officers of the company. In 1921 the employees "voluntarily" accepted a 10-percent wage cut to avert bankruptcy—the owners of the elevated having been protected by contract and the bondholders of the Interborough being similarly protected. Only two years later, the salary of President Hedley was raised from $65,000 to $75,000 a year, and General Counsel Quackenbush received an increase in two jumps from $60,000 to $72,000. Twenty of the higher officials had similar raises—before the wage cut was restored. The strike in 1926, for a wage increase and a real union, cost the company $1,500,000, or more than it would have cost to accede to the men's demands. For "remaining faithful to the company" during this strike, the President and General Counsel, like the strike-breakers, received bonuses of half a month's salary each—$3,125 and $3,000 respectively. The only losers from the strike were the city and the men. Under these circumstances, it was quite logically suggested by Mr. Untermeyer that the management might profit at any time by promoting more labor trouble. In addition, the public's property is being operated in what Mr. Untermeyer justly characterized as a despotic and un-American way.

Is there any chance of a unified system with a five-cent fare and a just return to the city through recapture or otherwise? Perhaps, but one great obstacle is the value which the city would have to pay for the recaptured property. The private companies would probably insist on a valuation, not at the original cost less depreciation, but at the present cost of replacement, which is much higher. Courts have often sustained this rule of value.

If the city had built and operated the subways in the beginning, it would have had to pay a return only on their actual cost. It would have had to pay only a moderate return on that. It would have avoided intricate financing and refinancing, long negotiations, expensive regulation and legal proceedings. It would have been forced to treat its employees more justly. Graft there might have been, but it is difficult to believe that any administration, however corrupt, would have dared to engage in graft to such an extent as to impose the losses on the taxpayers which have actually resulted. There would have been little danger at any time to the five-cent fare. And it certainly is reasonable to suppose that efficient managements could have been found to work for the city at not more than the salaries which have been paid by the private companies. There certainly is no case for private operation in the record of the New York subways.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AND COPYRIGHT, 1927, IN THE U. S., BY THE NEW REPUBLIC, INC., 421 WEST 21ST STREET, NEW YORK
HERBERT CROLY, PRESIDENT, DANIEL MEBANE, TREASURER

EDITORS

HERBERT CROLY BRUCE BLIVEN ROBERT LITTELL
GEORGE SOULE EDMUND WILSON STARK YOUNG
ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

JANE ADDAMS JOHN DEWEY WALDO FRANK
ALVIN JOHNSON E. C. LINDEMAN GILBERT SELDES
ELINOR WYLIE LEO WOLMAN LEWIS MUMFORD

RATES: SINGLE COPIES, FIFTEEN CENTS; YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, FIVE DOLLARS; CANADIAN, FIVE DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS; FOREIGN, SIX DOLLARS; THREE MONTHS' TRIAL, ONE DOLLAR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Disarmament—a Warning

PARADOXICAL as it may appear, it does not much matter whether disarmament conferences result in disarmament or not. Lest I be misunderstood, I hastily explain that the mere mechanical reduction of armaments will not prevent war if the war-like spirit is still abroad. A battle between *apaches* armed with knives is no less bloody than a battle between *apaches* armed with revolvers. It is necessary to persuade the *apache* that personal combats are foolish, unnecessary, and dishonorable. So it is with nations. The debates about the employment of poison gas have always seemed to me beside the point. To rule out the Zeppelin and to admit the aeroplane cannot make for peace. The consecration of the dreadnought and the denunciation of the submarine may affect the conditions of naval warfare, may indeed assure victory to one side or the other, but will not, in themselves, prevent naval warfare.

The old adage, "If you want peace, prepare for war," has been discredited; and we know that the piling up of weapons is perilous: if one collects explosives, they are likely to explode, and guns kept at full cock have a habit of going off by themselves. Yet to assure peace it is not sufficient that the explosives should be cut by half, or even by nine-tenths. It is something to the good that armaments should be reduced, but if that reduction does not represent a change of heart it will always be inadequate. The United States of America had, in 1917, no army and no munitions (I speak relatively), but army and munitions sprang from the ground at the tapping of a heel; and America's lack of army and munitions before a certain date was not enough to keep America out of the War. Nor had England, in 1914, army or munitions; nevertheless, England entered the fray first, and found army and munitions afterward. If troops were abolished and navies scrapped tomorrow, conflicts would not thereby be rendered impossible.

This is, of course, reasoning in the abstract. In practice, disarmament presupposes a will-to-peace. It is the will-to-peace that is vital. Theoretically, nations might agree to surrender this or that instrument of warfare, without thereby expressing a determination to outlaw war. They might, indeed, see a belligerent advantage in the agreement. Disarmament, if it is worth while, must be the consequence of peace, and the sincere desire for the perpetuation of peace. It is not, as such, a preparation for peace, or a guarantee of peace.

II

These remarks are commonplace, but they are to be repeated, because commonplaces are too often forgotten nowadays. If everybody had a sense of security, disarmament would follow automatically. Without a sense of security, it is possible to conceive partial disarmament, but that partial disarmament will not affect events any more than the disbanding of the police forces will affect crime—or, rather, the effect may be contrary to our wishes. Then you are arguing against disarmament, cries the reader! You think that disarmament conferences, whether called by President Coolidge or the League of Nations, are useless! You are asserting that the problem is being tackled at the wrong end! Not at all. I believe in disarmament. I believe in disarmament conferences. I am glad that the League held its deliberations on disarmament in April, even though the deliberations came to naught. I am glad that President Coolidge has convoked a three-power conference on naval disarmament at Geneva, even though it may prove, in the upshot, that the Coolidge conference has no more tangible result than the League conference.

Why? Not because, as I said at the beginning, it greatly matters whether disarmament is specifically and immediately advanced by an accord at the disarmament conference. What is valuable is the discussion itself, and the insistence on the need of international arrangements which will be, in some degree, an insurance against war. The League failed in April—if by failure one means that nothing was accomplished on which one can put one's finger—but it succeeded in the only way it can succeed at present; namely, in keeping the subject before the public, in arousing a popular demand for disarmament, in proclaiming and reinforcing the universal desire for perpetual peace. It is for this reason that the Coolidge conference should be welcomed. As I see things from my European post of observation, no immense concrete decisions can be expected. England is scarcely convinced that she came well out of the Washington conference, and it would not be unfair to suggest that England will enter the new conference distrustfully, resolved to protect her supposed interests. The United States, as a naval power, will not make revolutionary proposals, if such proposals are calculated to weaken her command of the sea. Japan will be as vigilant as England and America, and like them will test each proposition from its national standpoint. None of these countries, so far as one can judge, will take a wide view: the question they will put will be whether expenditure can be reduced by a tripartite convention, without reducing the relative strength of their own navies. As for France and Italy, they shrink from the conference, and do not want to send even simple observers who might be compromised. In any case, they will strive to protect their own fleets, which are composed of lighter craft than the fleets of the great naval powers. They will not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

budge from their thesis that while capital ships are the weapons of rich countries, submarines and other smaller ships are the weapons of poorer countries. In all this, are the prospects of naval disarmament such as should cause us, while keeping a judicial temper, to hail the Coolidge conference enthusiastically, as betokening drastic naval reductions?

III

I want in advance to warn the American politicians and the American public against pitching their immediate hopes too high. Unfortunately, it is customary to begin these debates with loud vague promises which are subsequently falsified, and thus to provoke corresponding disillusionment. Without on this occasion entering into details, I am bound, after a careful survey of the situation, to state that in my opinion the outlook is not brilliant. There will be the usual fencing, the usual exaltation of principles, and the usual mountain bringing forth the usual mouse. Even the most diminutive mouse is not to be despised. In the fable of La Fontaine, it was the mouse that released the lion. Yet, whatever the size of the beast that emerges from the gestation of Geneva at the foot of Mont Blanc, whether it be big or little, it is not by this animal that the conference should be judged. It is rather by its influence on the public mind. Such influence would be altogether good if preliminary exaggerations were not followed by disappointment, and disappointment by a tendency to cynicism and incredulity. Let us go into this conference not expecting too much, but expecting at least a reaffirmation of the purpose of all peoples.

The League has, of course, accomplished nothing after eight years. The United States, in convening the Washington Conference, accomplished something, and in convening the Geneva Conference may accomplish something more. In strict logic, the French would seem to be right in asserting that naval affairs cannot be dealt with apart from military affairs. The questions certainly interlock, but if we wait until a comprehensive settlement is possible we shall have to wait for hundreds of years. A start has to be made. An example has to be set. The French, indeed, not only refuse to separate the problem of land forces from the problem of sea forces, but they pretend that all decisions must be postponed until we know everything about the potentialities of war—geographical situation, demographic figures, economic possibilities: they would have us ascertain whether automobile factories can make munitions, and, if so, in what quantities; they would have us poring over railroad maps; they would, in a word, regard the entire resources of a nation from the military viewpoint. This theory is, philosophically, quite correct. Doubtless there is a link between the number of earthworms, determining the character of the soil, and the number of cannon in a country. Doubtless flora and fauna are not unrelated to flying men and field-marshals. But this is absurdly academic. It is reducing a sound intellectual concept to the ridiculous. It has been called scornfully the hogs-bogs-and-fogs theory; for hogs and bogs affect the maintenance of an army and the maneuvers of an army. Sensible men, however, are impatient when such a thesis, which would paralyze action, is put forward. We cannot remake the world completely, but we can make a beginning.

IV

It must be admitted that, although eight years have passed since the League solemnly recognized the necessity of reducing national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement of international obligations, there is disagreement all along the line; and, in Europe, Germany urges that the non-fulfillment of the Treaty promise releases her from the unilateral disarmament clauses of the Treaty. It is certain that before long—if the process has not already begun—the European countries which were defeated and consented to the Allied limitations of their navies, armies, and aeroplanes, will ignore these stipulations and place themselves on an equality with the victors. Europe will be more heavily armed than it was before 1914.

If this pessimistic prognostication is to be routed, the subject must, at all costs, be kept before the public. It is important, too, that illusions should not be fostered. Lord Cecil seems to think that it is good to profess gratification at the outcome of the Geneva discussions. He is surely wrong. The outcome should be denounced. The nations took up antagonistic attitudes toward each other. With regard to land forces, one set of nations relies on conscripted armies, and in defiance of its own reasoning declines to count the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of trained reserves, in its estimates of its armies. France, the apostle of comprehensiveness, which would mobilize women and children as well as men, capital as well as labor, will not consider her reserves as part of her army. England and other countries which do not practise conscription in peace-time would properly include trained reserves among the effectives. In respect of air-craft, the British prefer to number the aeroplanes, while the French prefer the criterion of horse-power. Again there are those who would confine their attention to military air-craft, and others who see that civil air-craft may be used for military purposes.

The financial approach presents difficulties. The French military budget, for example, is comparatively low, while the British and the American military budgets are comparatively high. Expenditure is not a test, for methods of payment vary considerably. Moreover, what sort of control is to be exercised? England and the United States contend that the good faith of the signatories must be as-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sumed. France calls for supervision. If there is no supervision, astute nations will cheat scrupulous nations. But if there is supervision, national sovereignty is shattered, and the old bogey of the superstate reappears.

V

It will be seen that the League is at sixes and sevens. This fact should not be pressed to the point of discouragement, but it should be recalled in order that unwarranted beliefs should not be entertained about the efficacy of the prospective Coolidge conference. The Coolidge conference will wisely concentrate on ships. Even on this narrow issue, however, a cleavage definitely reveals itself. There are countries like England which say that not only must the total tonnage of fleets be restricted, but also within the different categories of battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and so forth, there must be limitation of the number of ships, of the size of ships, and of the caliber of guns. There are other nations—in particular France and Italy—which will willingly agree only to the limitation of total tonnage, leaving themselves free to disperse that tonnage as they please. France eventually proposed that, in future building programs, each country should define its intention by categories, with the right to vary the distribution of tonnage between these categories on giving notice. The struggle between the navalists who can build capital ships, and who therefore want to prevent the construction of lighter craft, especially submarines, which are the natural enemy of capital ships, and the navalists who, unable to build capital ships, want to nullify the action of capital ships by constructing hordes of submarines, is a struggle which will perhaps jeopardize the success of the naval conference. It is useless to disguise the struggle by ignoring the existence of France and of other submarines countries. If they are left outside the conference, they cannot be bound by its decisions, and what agreement can then be reached by the United States, England, and Japan, who will find their calculations upset?

VI

The crux of the naval situation is the submarine. It is comparatively easy to regulate the strength of dreadnoughts, but it is not easy to regulate the strength of submarines. Whether France is present at the conference or not, the French thesis is liable to wreck the conference. It is essential, therefore, to understand the French contentions. France has made a virtue of necessity. She cannot build capital ships, and therefore her naval experts have condemned capital ships, and are prepared to depend on the deadly submarine. There are six of the larger vessels in service, but they date from prewar days and are almost obsolete. France is too impecunious to maintain them. But France has a number of up-to-date light cruisers—three of 8,000 tons afloat, and four others of 10,000 tons nearly ready. There are, besides, two older cruisers. Germany, it is pointed out, will have an authorized fleet of six up-to-date light cruisers; and Italy will have nine. According to French figures, Japan will have eight, and England over thirty, besides a dozen less modern vessels. The United States has neglected this branch of construction. France in 1929 will have fifty-six torpedo-boats and sixty-seven submarines. The figures may be reversed for Italy.

Broadly, it is argued that the United States, superior in capital ships, but perhaps inferior to England in light and rapid cruisers, cannot expect France, without capital ships, to scrap and to renounce its only naval arm. France has to secure many more miles of sea communications than the United States, though only half the British mileage of sea communications. She has five times more mileage than Japan, and eight times more than Italy. The coast line she has to defend, metropolitan and colonial, is almost equal to that of the United States. Altogether, it would be imprudent to believe that the question of lighter craft is one which can be settled without France, or settled at all without the most thorough preparations and arduous negotiations. I insist that, if anticipations are raised too high, the promoters of the conference will be riding for a fall; but I also insist that, with an open-eyed consciousness of the general position, it is well that the debate should begin, and that no opportunity should be lost of impressing on the universal conscience the desirability of genuine measures of disarmament at no remote date.

Paris. SISLEY HUDDLESTON.

The Horn

In coming to the feast I found
A venerable silver-throated horn,
Which were I brave enough to sound,
Then all as from that moment born
Would breathe the honey of this clime,
And three times merry in their time,
Would praise the virtue of that horn.

The mist is risen like thin breath,
The young leaves of the ground smell chill,
So faintly are they strewn on death,
The road I came down a west hill.
But none can name as I can name
A little golden-bright thing, flame,
Since bones have caught their marrow-chill.

And in a thicket passed me by,
In the black brush a running hare,
Having a specter in his eye,
That sped in darkness to the snare.
And who but I can know in pride,
The heart set beating in the side,
Has but the wisdom of a hare?

LÉONIE ADAMS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Confessions of a College Dean

I AM a dean—a dean of men in a medium-sized American college.

Do you know what a dean is? Most people, I find, don't. Some are disposed, apparently, to regard the office with a certain awe; others, quite unmistakably, incline to contempt; but in either case they have little conception what it is they are respecting or despising. I must, therefore, explain before I begin confessing.

A dean has ordinarily two aspects, which may be called the ideal and the practical. Ideally considered, he is a guide-philosopher-and-friend for the young men under his charge, the person to whom they bring their troubles of every kind—scholastic, financial, amatory, and moral—for wise counsel and guidance. It is assumed that he shall be a man of wide experience, mellow wisdom, and youthful heart, to whom young men will freely unbosom, and who will understand, as father would (or should, though he sometimes doesn't). Undoubtedly this is the conception every college seeks to maintain. You will find something of the sort in the statutes; and the idea recurs in the literature sent to prospective freshmen and in addresses made by the president to groups of parents on Dads' Day, Mothers' Day, and similar occasions.

But, actually, no college in these days lets its dean be such a counselor, except incidentally and almost unofficially. Practically he is a policeman. He must spend substantially all his time promulgating, and, so far as possible, enforcing, the multifarious rules and regulations which the faculty are constantly enacting. Among the things which it is the dean's business to make the students do are the following:

1. To spend, spasmodically at least, a certain minimum of time in study.
2. To attend classes. (In this case, and with respect also to items 3-5, there is, of course, no thought of 100 percent regularity; there is ordinarily a liberal allowance of "cuts," or permitted absences; but as the student approaches this limit the dean must warn him, and, if he oversteps it, must penalize him.)
3. To attend chapel.
4. To participate in military drill.
5. To take regular physical exercise.
6. To be vaccinated.
7. To refrain from gross cheating in (a) final examinations, (b) mid-semester quizzes, (c) laboratory exercises, and (d) themes, theses, and other written work prepared outside the classroom.
8. To refrain from getting drunk, at least in public.
9. To refrain from smoking in the college buildings.
10. To keep hazing and class scraps within such bounds that actual loss of life or limb will not occur frequently.
11. To omit from the college "comic" magazine jokes or pictures of such undisguised indecency as would render the publication unmailable under U. S. postal regulations.
12. To close college dances at some specified hour prior to daybreak.
13. To have at least nominal chaperons present at such dances.
14. To pay their bills to the college and the local merchants.
15. To refrain from writing checks with no balance in the bank; also from forgery.
16. To refrain from using automobiles except under certain narrow restrictions.
17. To keep off the grass.

The foregoing list is by no means exhaustive. I have merely jotted down the first few items that came into my head. But it will serve; having read that list, you know what a dean really is. And you will grant me, I think, that "policeman" is right.

It is not my omissions or failures as a counselor which prick my conscience and move me at this time to confession. Rather it is my success as a policeman. I am, I believe, a pretty good policeman. I do actually enforce, to a reasonable extent, all the regulations cited above and a number of others. So do the other deans of other colleges. (A dean who is not a good policeman soon loses his job.) And it is this efficiency of us deans which does the mischief. By our tireless and skilful labors, our acumen, rigor, and zeal, we bring it to pass that the colleges as constituted today can keep going, can carry on without obvious breakdown or open scandal, where what is needed is such a breakdown and scandal as would force a reorganization of this whole business of higher education.

For, surely, things have come to a pretty pass with the higher learning, when the central office on every campus, to which recourse is taken in every possible connection, is a police office; when it has become axiomatic that "students" must be *compelled:* (a) to give some slight attention to the business of learning, and (b) to refrain from all manner of childish misdemeanors.

There has, of course, come to be some dispute as to what the purpose of the college is or should be; but the long-time sense of the community still holds, I believe, that that purpose is predominantly intellectual—that it centers, in some way, about studies. If this be so, then the only valid reason why a young man or woman should go to such an institution is a self-felt desire for knowledge and for the intellectual and moral development which accompanies, or tends to accompany, the acquisition of knowl-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge. It is granted that knowledge may be desired either esthetically, for its own sake, or more practically, for some vocational purpose (professional or pre-professional), or, best of all, perhaps, in both these ways at once. But such a desire on some basis is plainly the only right reason for attending an institution of higher learning—and the colleges still like to maintain that that is what they are.

Is such the motivation of the 800,000 students now in residence in the colleges of this country? Let us not be unduly cynical. For a considerable number it is. But for the majority we may take our answer from college fiction, in which studies figure only as an incidental bore and learned professors as butts of ridicule; from college movies (I have witnessed a number of these, and never yet have seen one book pictured upon the screen, even as an article of furniture in a "student's" "study"); from the popular meaning of the adjective "collegiate," which may be applied to trousers, pipes, motor cars, salacious humor, or drunken parties, but would be felt at once to be inappropriate in any intellectual connection; most explicitly of all, perhaps, from the excellent college song which runs:

> We all came to college,
> But we didn't come for knowledge,
> So we'll raise hell while we're here.

The actual reasons for the presence of these simple-minded hell-raisers include the following:

(1) A belief that a college degree—any degree, even the unspecialized B. A. or B. S.—is a means of access to a lucrative white-collar job.

(2) A parallel belief that a degree, or even attendance at a recognized college for a year or two without a degree, is something of a passport into Good Society.

(3) A desire on the part of many well-to-do parents, whose children have been taken off their hands for many years by various kinds of schools and camps, to have this care continued for four years longer, until the boy shall be old enough to be of some real use in business and the girl old enough to marry. Such parents use the college as a sort of final day-nursery.

(4) A desire on the part of boys and girls themselves to participate in athletics, fraternities, and all the miscellaneous variety of diversions which have come to center around the colleges more numerously, hectically, and hilariously than they can be found elsewhere in American life.

(5) The mere fact that everybody's doing it. To go to college has become the fashionable and correct thing for young men and women of collegiate age to do, if their fathers can afford it. They go to college just as they take up golf and horseback riding and join a country club.

None of these reasons for going to college is inherently vicious. They are all natural, understandable human motives, even laudable from certain points of view. But they do bring the college face to face with a new problem—new, in anything like its present dimensions, within the last generation: that of the presence within its purlieus of a very large number of nice, normal, agreeable, and "eligible" young people who are quite innocent of any active intellectual interests and who desire to use the college for purposes alien to those which it has always professed.

What would the college naturally do, confronted with this situation? I am not asking, as yet, what it ought to have done (and ought still to do); that is another question. But what *would* it do? What would any of us have done in a similar contingency?

Obviously it would try compulsion. These crowds of youngsters had been admitted as "students," and college was traditionally a place for study. Therefore these new "students," like others, *must* study and *must* go to classes. It appeared they did not care for these things, had never thought of caring for them; they had not "come for knowledge." No matter, "students" they were, and they must at least go through the motions.

So machinery was devised and rules were passed, one rule and set of rules after another, until now the "Regulations" of every college run into scores or even hundreds; and the president and professors tried to enforce these rules. But it was soon discovered that such enforcement was no bagatelle to be undertaken as an extra by officers already sufficiently occupied. It was a man's job in itself. And so, one by one, the colleges have hired an enforcer, under the guise of a counselor, and they usually call him a dean.

It must not be forgotten, even in our cynical and satiric moods, that, among the 800,000, there are some few thousands of young men and women who are genuinely interested in learning and unobtrusively apply themselves to it. They are almost completely submerged and lost sight of amid the noisy "collegiate" turmoil surrounding them, but they are there—though a dean seldom encounters them in the flesh. Why should he encounter them? They don't need a dean; and he is kept busy rounding up the others.

I think that the colleges in general, and we deans in particular, are worthy, not of praise indeed, but of some admiration for the skill and efficiency with which we have organized and are maintaining this difficult rounding up process. I doubt if ever before in the history of the world so large a number of human beings have been successfully coerced into doing something distasteful to them; and am inclined to maintain that if the army of college deans could be drafted into the service of the federal government for the enforcement of the Volstead Act, and would apply to that end the same ingenuity, assiduity, and rigor which they daily display in their present vocation, the United States would be bone-dry within six months.

But I must confess that when occasionally I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

snatch a moment from my arduous routine and allow myself to question what it is all about, I am somewhat appalled at the pitiable futility of the whole business. There is not—cannot be—any real use in forcing any person to study. The word itself originally implied desire and zeal; and anyone who has ever really learned anything knows that nothing can be really learned in any other mood. And if this be so, as it unescapably is, then I and my fellow deans, in so successfully compelling the non-students—i. e., the non-desirous—to go through the motions of desiring and pursuing learning, are doing harm rather than good in the institutions and society in which we labor so diligently. Specifically, we by our mighty efforts are merely enabling the colleges to retain in their membership vast numbers of youngsters who ought, for their own good and that of the colleges, to be summarily sent away.

I think what we deans ought to do is to get together, agree upon a date, and, when that happy day arrives, commit official hara-kiri—all resign at once.

Of course, an appalling chaos would follow in the colleges. Joy would be unconfined. More than half the students would stop going to classes altogether, to devote all their time—instead of only most of it—to athletics, dances, movies, and joy-riding. In every stadium great bonfires would blaze, into which the hated text-books would be hurled, to be consumed amid groans and yells and rousing cheers; the scene would exceed the peppiest "pep meeting" ever held. Of course, the grass would suffer; automobile accidents would increase; bootleggers would reap undeserved profits; and professors would enjoy an unscheduled vacation.

But presently it would be found that some young men and women—perhaps a larger number than we are inclined to suppose—were returning to classes, or reading in the library, or playing about in the laboratories—*because they wanted to!* And then the college exercises could be resumed, with that remnant, on a purely voluntary basis. And after due time allowed—a period sufficient to permit second thoughts and fundamental long-time interests to prevail over merely temporary ebullition—those youngsters who had not of their own accord returned to something like full-time work could be quietly and honorably dismissed and advised to return to their respective homes, to get jobs, and to get married; in short, to set about the serious business of earning a living and raising a family without further expensive and demoralizing delay.

Out of the remnant, a real college could be constituted. Not that all would be well immediately. The remaining students would shortly be found by the professors to be a decidedly troublesome lot. They would not long put up with the type of instruction which the indifferent and recalcitrant majority of the present student-bodies have forced the professors to give and got them into the habit of giving. The remnant would soon be demanding fewer and better lectures, less contemptibly elementary texts, more freedom of choice as to subjects, more time to work by themselves and "on their own," and the abandonment of those numerous pedagogical devices which are essentially policial—weekly and monthly quizzes, daily "written recitations," perhaps nearly all recitations (many of which serve little purpose beyond making sure that the pupils have studied their lessons). There are some professors who have become so accustomed to these childish methods that they might find it impossible to change; it would necessarily go hard with these. But on the whole I think very highly of my professorial colleagues. I am convinced that most of them, as soon as they had recovered from their first amazement and incredulity, would rejoice in meeting the new situation and would renew their youth in doing so. Such is the much-needed academic revolution which I and my fellow deans are retarding, by our success in maintaining the *status quo*.

But if such is my opinion, why do I go on? Well, I salve my conscience a little by reflecting that I do get in some real counseling of real students on really intellectual matters, which is perhaps worth while. And, for the rest, it would do little good—no good at all, in fact—for me alone to resign; and I have little hope of getting my fellow deans throughout the country to join me in a general exodus. Most of them seem to think they are "doing good" every day, by binding up limbs which ought to be amputated. If I should resign, all by myself, my college would simply get a new dean, who would take office the day I left. No joyous interim would be permitted. And my successor would probably regard his functions more seriously than I do, perform his policing still more efficiently, and thus do really more harm. So I shall probably go ahead, solacing myself at times with Falstaff's apology for his highway robbery:

"Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation."

(This is the twelfth in a series of anonymous confessions, in which men and women in various walks of life are giving their professional or spiritual autobiographies.)

What Other Shield?

What other shield but this against the gods,
Those early gods erected of iron stone,
Those gods with cat's-eyes on a river-bank
Watching a queen believe her beauty her own,
Those gods of golden height among lacquer beams,
Those gods of implements and swollen faces,
Those gods of tablets and baptismal streams,
Gods of all the lands and all the races,
What other shield but this against the gods
Lest they might conquer us and bear us down?
Laughter, laughter, nothing but human laughter,
Till all the gods are gone!

WITTER BYNNER.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In Dedham Jail

A Visit to Sacco and Vanzetti

THE automobile slides through a pleasant green New England landscape: parks and ponds and big houses set far back from the road, among Louisa Alcott's own lilacs. A sharp turn through the elms, a hundred feet down a side road, and here we are.

It does not look like a prison, this nondescript, rambling structure, painted white and gray, and, like the houses, set back in a lawn, with a curving driveway and wooden stables at one side. It looks like a private school—or do all private schools look like prisons? . . . The stables have been converted to garages, but even so, there is such an air of 1880 about them that involuntarily you lift your eyes to the gable for the galloping horse, silhouetted in iron, which should be there as weather-vane. Up a flight of steps, through a door, and now we know where we are. Before us is another door, made of big vertical steel bars. A guard lets us in—an elderly, silver-haired New Englander, like a lobsterman come ashore. We are in a huge rectangular space, flooded with sunshine on this lovely June day. It is hardly a room. So much wall space has been removed and so many iron bars substituted, that it is like a cage; and here come those it encloses. No ball-and-chain, no lockstep; but men in single file, heads bent, arms folded on their breasts. They look young and healthy, on the whole; there are some fine faces and well modeled heads, and others which are less pleasing. These men wear trousers of gray stuff, uncouthly cylindrical—since they never have been pressed and never will be—and gray-and-white-striped shirts, cheap and coarse. They mount the stairs and pass along the balcony before the cell block, falling out of line one by one. The air resounds with the clash of metal, ringing harshly in our ears, as they lock themselves in. Every few minutes during the next half-hour, another such file passes through, silhouetted against the bars and the lush green of grass and trees, climbs the stairs and breaks up as it enters the cells.

From the cell block they appear, these two most famous prisoners in all the world, walking briskly, side by side. No bars are interposed between them and their visitors; we are introduced, shake hands, sit down on a bench and some chairs, like so many delegates to a convention, meeting for the first time in a hotel lobby. They are in prison garb like the others; they look well, seem in good spirits. Both are of average height, both black-haired, both somewhat bald in front, a baldness which somehow gives them a mild domestic air. Vanzetti wears a big, bristling Italian moustache; Sacco is clean shaven and his hair is clipped rather close on his round Southern skull. Vanzetti is expansive, a glowing friendly temperament, with bright eyes, an expressive face; Sacco is intelligent, too, but less emotional. He listens acutely, interjects a shrewd word or two at times. He judges men's specific acts, pessimistically, in the light of general principles, and usually for the purpose of deflating Vanzetti's too-generous view of human nature. What he says sounds true; and sometimes profound as well. He is not sullen. Neither of them reveals to the casual visitor any trace of that warping of the faculties which the experts say has been produced in them.

Today is an anniversary of a sort, for these two. One month from today, or within the six days thereafter, they are to die. Unless the Governor of Massachusetts acts to stay the process of the law, these strong and healthy men, eager and full of life, will sit in the electric chair, their heads tonsured, their trouser legs split, for the electrodes, and say farewell to life. Thus the state will take its Old Testament revenge for a murder which someone committed seven years ago.

Well, perhaps Sacco and Vanzetti were members of the band which did that deed, though I know what I am talking about when I say that the chances against it are a thousand to one. But that they did not have a fair trial, there is no doubt whatever. No intelligent man has ever read the record of what happened in the courtroom, coming to the case with an open mind, without being convinced that these two were the haphazard victims of a blind hostility in the community, which was compounded of "patriotic" fervor, anti-foreignism, and of hatred of these men in particular because, as Professor Felix Frankfurter has summed it up, they denied the three things judge and jury held most dear: God, country and property.

We try, sitting now on these hard chairs in Dedham jail, to speak of their plight, to offer the words of cheer which decency seems to dictate. They listen gravely, and we read in their eyes the disbelief which they are too courteous to put into words. When you have been under the shadow of death for seven years, you do not any longer clutch at straws of hope. "We'll be glad if you are right," says Vanzetti politely; but it is as though one said to a baby, "It will be nice, if you can reach the moon." They have long expected that their martyrdom, which has already been so incredibly cruel, will be completed, and that they will die in the chair.

They are willing to spend but a moment on their own case, however. Vanzetti's mind is full of something else, and now, impatiently, he pours it out. He is troubled about Tom Mooney, who is dying of a broken heart in a bleak gray California prison by the Golden Gate. He looks at us appealingly,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his words tumble out. God in Heaven! This man, who is to die in four weeks, is thinking only of another man 3,000 miles away, victim of an injustice like his own. Could we do something, Vanzetti asks, for poor Tom Mooney? He himself has been doing all he can—writing, writing, letters to many people, especially to some Austrian friends, urging them to keep up the fight. "I may not be able to help much longer," says Vanzetti, with a twisted little smile. "And he needs help, Tom Mooney. He's a sick man. If they don't look after him, he'll die."

Vanzetti's English, if not always idiomatically correct, is fluent and, on the whole, accurate. Sacco, perhaps, does not do quite so well; but it is fair to remember that most of the time they try to say things that are not too easy, even in one's mother tongue. You must not be deceived by an accent, or by the workingman's easy way they have of sitting on a hard bench as though they were used to it. These are book men. Their political faith is philosophic anarchism, and they know its literature from Kropotkin down. In this year's graduating class at Harvard, there will not be twenty men who, on their own initiative, have read as many difficult, abstruse works as these gray-clad prisoners.

Since today's visitors are in no mood for abstract controversy, the hosts, ever courteous, follow their lead. The homes of these two men in Italy are mentioned. Have we ever been there? We never have, but we have been not far away. Florence, we all agree, is charming. The polite Americans call it Firenze, the polite Italians give it the Anglicized form. And Naples! Ah, yes, lovely, is it not? And we go on to speak of a famous Italian wine; and one says, "When you are free, you will perhaps go back to Italy and drink again the *lacrimae Christi?*"

"When we are free . . ." says Vanzetti thoughtfully. Does he see against the bars a great clock which is ticking away his life and that of his companion?—*"Tick, tock!* thirty-one days to live! *Tick, tock!* thirty days to live!"

One does not know. He says nothing for a few minutes, and then speaks quietly of exercise. Lately they have been given an Italian lawn-bowling set, which they use during the hour and a half they are permitted to be out-of-doors. "It is good," says Sacco, and Vanzetti corroborates: "It makes you sweat." Besides this, every morning in his cell, Vanzetti takes setting-up exercises; he flexes his biceps to show you, lest his English may not have conveyed the idea. The prison food, he goes on, is not well selected, too much starch. Before they had the set of lawn-bowls, Vanzetti had terrible indigestion much of the time. Now things are better. In their earlier years in prison, these men were treated with abominable cruelty. As their plight has become better known around the world, things have been made easier for them. Indeed, they have little to complain of, if you overlook their deadly peril of being victims of a foul judicial murder.

One of their visitors loses the thread of the conversation, thinking about that murder. One can understand a good hot-blooded killing; some day I shall commit one myself, if the organ grinder keeps on playing under my window. But to murder in blood that is seven years cold!—to assassinate men in order to bolster the prestige of an unbalanced judge. . . . And now to find majority opinion in a great American community supporting that murder! . . .

He comes back from this by-path with a start, to hear Vanzetti speaking of his other trial, the one at Plymouth, which was even more brazen in its denial of common justice and common decency than the joint ordeal with Sacco. He remembers, Vanzetti does, with mild reproach, that some of the little fund which his friends—poor people, like himself—had raised to defend him, was squandered. A man took money to get an automobile and interview possible defense witnesses. (Judge Thayer subsequently failed to take these witnesses seriously, on the ground that they were Italians and that their testimony, therefore, could not be important.) But this man who was given funds to get an automobile, instead of seeing witnesses, went joy riding instead. Was that fair? Vanzetti asks.

He has a hatred of injustice, one sees that in him perhaps most clearly of all. With his philosophical and political ideas this writer does not happen to agree; and yet one must recognize that no other sect in the modern world comes as close to primitive Christianity as his. He is opposed equally to Mussolinism in Italy and Sovietism in Russia, and for the same reason—he is against any rule supported by force. They do not believe in force, these two men who (according to the state's official theory) after a lifetime of sober industry, on a given day suddenly turned murderers to get money "for the cause," when the cause didn't need it; planned a crime which bore every earmark of the expert professional, didn't get any of the money when it was over, and made no effort to hide or escape afterward.

And now they are to die in four weeks.

Four weeks! Our conversation has halted for a little; we all have things to think about. We learn now—by accident—that we are keeping our hosts from their dinner; if they are delayed much longer it will be cold, or they will get none. And so we stand up and shake hands and say good-bye. "Good-bye." "Good-bye." "You see my friend Mr. A— in New York? You tell him I thank him so much. Perhaps you do something to help Tom Mooney?"

And they walk away toward the cell-block, these three—Sacco and Vanzetti and the unseen gray-robed figure which is ever at their side; and we go out into the glorious June evening, to the car and the chauffeur and the road home.

BRUCE BLIVEN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Theater Season

AS a part of a nation that has no intention of being discouraged about anything if we can help it, we may begin a little review of this season in our Broadway theater by saying that it was undoubtedly better than the last. 1926-27 in the theater was undoubtedly better than 1925-26.

Setting your thoughts to work, can you, unless you are a theatrical person absorbed in every venture and its fortunes and gossip, remember anything from last season? From other years you recall such remarkable productions as the Jones-Hopkins-Barrymore "Hamlet," or the more significant "Macbeth," or dramas like "Cæsar and Cleopatra," "Candida," "The Little Clay Cart," "The Show-Off," "The Hairy Ape," "What Price Glory"; or the coming of Duse, the Moscow Art Theater, or single performances like Mr. Jacob Ben-Ami's in "Samson and Delilah," Miss Haidee Wright's in "Will Shakespeare," Miss Pauline Lord's in "Anna Christie." But none of these fell to last year. For 1925-26 it is easiest to resort to Mr. Burns Mantle's excellent manual. There you will see that at least no season was ever before so productive. The hundred and seventy dramatic entertainments included Mr. George Kelly's "Craig's Wife" and Mr. Eugene O'Neill's "Great God Brown," Señorita Raquel Meller and so on, but none of these equalled past events; on the whole it was a flat year.

This season has brought the usual mystery plays, revues and farces, and at least one attempt at as difficult a problem as the modern American stage could tackle; the Theater Guild's revival of "The Brothers Karamazov," for which they brought over its original producer, M. Copeau, and with which they achieved a highly dubious result. There were several foreign importations: Madame Cécile Sorel, superb mannikin dressed out in the splendors of the old Théâtre Français and useful by way of reminding us that diction and manners still exist as elements in the art of acting; the Parisian Guitrys, agreeable and expert if without importance; the Spanish Art Theater, with the plays of Martinez Sierra, a good ensemble, a lovely actress in Señorita Barcena and an illustration of a certain modern, gentle realism in Spain; and finally the Habima Players from Moscow, a magnificent instance of the theater. But none of these made any great stir or drew enough public to fill anybody's pockets or to fertilize Broadway.

The best thing to be noted in the season just past is the rise in the quality of the commercial plays. You can truly say that the tone, the production and the technical adequacy of the sum of the commercial plays this season has greatly advanced. By these you mean plays that are, first of all, theater—as any play of whatever rank must be—and that are of a depth that—no matter how important or profound the subject may be—never exceeds a certain vivacious treatment. To such plays the greatest matters remain only incidental. To ideas, to thought, their relation is only indirect, like the oxen in Balzac who could never be more than uncles to the bullocks. Their playwrights either cannot or will not explore the subject except as good salable theater stuff. Into this commercial list must fall all the better plays of the season, including "Chicago," which, though it amounts to more than any, remains one of them.

Of these plays, the three leading melodramas of the season, "Broadway," "Caponsacchi" and "Ned McCobb's Daughter" are certainly better than most of their kind in the past; "Broadway" because of a certain common sense in the approach to the subject matter, and a certain freshness in its honesty of method, especially in the directing; "Caponsacchi" because, while never rising to the blazing talents of Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," it injects into its glaring, sentimental melodrama a gleam of real poetic feeling and comment; and "Ned McCobb's Daughter" because of its sharply defined character drawing and its genuine acting qualities.

Of plays where the subject matter is more ambitious, plays where there is something of a problem or serious comment on life, "Spread Eagle," "The Captive," "The Silver Cord," "The Road to Rome," "Saturday's Children" and "Chicago" represent what an improvement over most of our past! They are none of them consummate in their kind, if taken seriously in the field of drama; they are not "Cæsar and Cleopatras," "Hedda Gablers," "Cherry Orchards," but remain professional theater shows, satirical farce, historical satire, every-day realism, expertly contrived as engaging entertainment. "The Captive" and "The Silver Cord" are plays that turn on problems, fine examples of facile and sure-fire theatrical writing. "The Road to Rome" misses many of its own implications but, even as it stands, is rich in fooling and in contemporary cracks and leisurely audacities; and "Spread Eagle," by virtue of its really attacking a hot subject—militarism, Wall Street and intervention in Mexico—turns what might be rather stale melodrama into a much relished gusto and delight. "Saturday's Children," if somewhat dull, is a good little play of common life, with more contrivance than less imaginative playwrights could have given to it, a more pungent diction and something more of pathetic and ironical feeling. Of all these plays, however, "Chicago" is by far the best, and is, in fact, the one stinging and convincing piece of the season.

In great art, whether the theater or any other, there is always something *bona fide*. A work may be tragic or it may be gay, but it springs from a whole impulse, and by the vitality of this impulse it is joyous and alive. This is obviously true of Shakespeare's "Hamlet," "Othello" or "Macbeth," of Sophocles in "Œdipus" or in the "Electra" that Miss Margaret Anglin produced this spring, of Molière, of Ibsen in "Hedda Gabler" or "The Wild Duck," of the Goldoni in Miss Le Gallienne's "Locandiera" at the Civic Repertory Theater, and of scores of other instances. In lesser artists, the impulse is less sound and whole. A problem may be serious, if you like, but it is seen more as intriguing the spectator's attention or as making an effective dramatic crux, or as startling in its newness and journalistic snap, or as promising a hundred other attractions. Or an idea for a play is seen as gay and riotous or as biting and burlesquing, without the author's being lighted all through with the gaiety or riot of it, or exhilarated with its poison and lampoon. And even if, in all these cases, the playwright is alive all through with his matter and can live himself in it, it does not follow that he can carry this into his art. He may not be able to put what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he has in him all through his dramatic creation. And, taking the art of the theater as a whole, we can by no means count on a play's being able—even if it has complete success within itself—to get its quality expressed in terms of the directing, the acting, the audience.

"Chicago" underwent, I have been told, considerable rewriting as the season progressed, a fact that might afford no poor comment on the play's qualities. It is the only thing I saw during the season that I should want to see twice, not because it was so good, but because it was so full of meat, of wit, of breadth and point, and of the *bona fide* gusto of life. People have said that "Chicago" would be found to be a better drama than we might expect if acted seriously, if the acting were more in accord with what is at bottom the dark content of the play. This I think is wrong, but it bears on one of the chief virtues of "Chicago" as it was given, which is that the same tone ran through play, acting, and even audience. This play about murderesses and publicity mania is complete in its callousness; it might have been written by the devil; and the hard-boiled high spirits with which its incredible matter was thrown off by dramatist and players alike and received by the audience, represents, whatever you may think of its moral comment, the theatrical summit of our season.

I have seen no decor this season that one need bother to think twice about, though plenty of it had adequate craft, smart job work.

Of individual performances, the best I have seen were: for character acting, Miss Dorothy Stickney as the religious lunatic—the only murderess or official in the lot who mentioned God at all—in "Chicago"; for intellectual creation and subtlety of shading, Mr. Philip Merivale's Hannibal in "The Road to Rome"; and for tragic depth and her own strange, unforgettable drawing, Miss Pauline Lord as the clergyman's wife in "Mariners." STARK YOUNG.

Flood-Water

I

IT was as if we were waiting for the ducks to rise. The sky was still dark, no sound came over the water. We sat silently in the skiff, the boatman resting, ripples drifting widely by our side. Any moment now, dawn on the horizon, guns might boom and the startled mallard whirr into flight.

We drifted. Out of the dim half-light, hung with mist, the roof of a house detached itself and flowed into sight . . . a silly roof with colored slates and water lapping at its chimney. The boatman stretched out his arm. "This was the Molideaux farm," he said laconically, and bent to his oars. The blades shone dully, dripping, and the knots of his muscles brought us further into desolation.

Tops of trees, heavy with summer foliage, were like mossy bushes growing from the surface of the water. A line of telephone poles, tilting crazily, dropped their wires into the flood. Empty crates, with garishly brilliant labels, floated by, half-filled with water. Further on were the grouped roofs of an inundated village. An iron cock with wetted spurs pointed idly to the south. . . .

The sun devours fog and clouds and the sky is brilliantly blue. Birds wheel overhead in easy flight, borne on wide-spread wings. They come lower, vicious beaks out-thrust, heads filthy and bald, and three drowned swine, swollen to the immensity of cattle, drift sluggishly by our side. . . .

II

Dwellers in the Teche country, where Evangeline's oak is proudly pointed out (the oaks of Evangeline are plentiful in the Teche), the Associated Press reporters have grown eloquent over their flight. "The second exile of the Acadians" they call it, and pound out page upon page of copy.

I watched some of them come into Lafayette. They came silent and somewhat bewildered, not quite understanding. Hoover had arrived and told them they must leave their homes. Within a few weeks "Hoovair" had become a great man to them, a man of fable and legend, and so they left. Women and children sat upon bundles of clothing and mattresses, piled high on creaking wagons. Tables stuck rigid legs over the dashboards and battered mirrors caught the sun. The men followed, driving their cattle before them, dusty, weary, their eyes red with want of sleep.

If they are Acadians, exiled for a second time, they know it not.

They know no bitterness. Some of them, whose scapulars hang from their necks, speak of the will of God. Most merely shrug their shoulders. The waters have risen, the land is flooded. Yes, that is true. But there have been floods before. The water will soon be gone. Then they will go back again. What else can one do? . . .

III

Having been fed and clothed, the Bordeaux family prepared to spend their first night in the refugee camp. Prayers were being said. "Come now," said the father. "Now we pray for that good man, Mister Red Cross." His wife and children crossed themselves and mumbled, in low voices, the Our Father.

IV

Flame on the earth and flame in their faces. Two thousand men at work on the levee. Orders, shouts, curses. Shadows running, torches burning. Activity. Bags being filled with mud, mattresses made of willows being sunk, stones piled on the mattresses. Powerful black men, backs bending with rhythmic ease, bearing bags of earth. Piling the bags and singing as they work.

Come on sand bag
Git your place
erumphh
Gotta stop dis ribber
Flood be comin' soon
erumphh

Flame on the levee. All night long. Shadows that are men at work.

In the morning, when they think the fight is over, there is a spout of water the thickness of a man's waist, the sound of mud slipping, a sullen roar. The men rush yelling from the embankment, a Negro falls into the swirling river, tele-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graph wires crackle with the news. There has been a new crevasse. Four more parishes will be flooded.

V

They knew the story of the flood and how the Lord took care of Noah. Straightway they began to build an ark. Their black faces sweated in the sun, they sawed and they hammered and they planed and they prayed. Finally the ark was finished and they knew it was good. Twenty of them, both male and female, with much of their goods, moved into the floating house. They sang hymns and chants and waited for the waters.

But their ship was not so good as they knew. When the first of the water came, slowly creeping over the land, the ark would not float. The flood rose higher and small streams poured in through the holes. Soon the floor was covered. The water continued rising. It reached their knees.

When it dawned upon them that the Lord was on some other side they broke open the door and frantically waded and ran to higher ground. . . .

VI

Sarah Jones bore twins in the refugee camp, and because she bore twins she was proud. She lay on her bed, black and enormous, staring with wide white eyes. Time came for the christening and the Catholic priest asked what she would name them. "High-water and Overflow," she said, and so they were named. HAMILTON BASSO.

A Chekhov Miscellany

PERHAPS the time is a little nearer when Chekhov will come into his own in this country. There is no doubt of one thing: we have drifted a long way, in the last few years, from the O. Henry type of short story, with its corkscrew spiral climax and its cuckoo-clock mechanism. The best of Sherwood Anderson, Ring Lardner and Ernest Hemingway is much more in the spirit of Chekhov than it is in that of O. Henry. The audience that likes to read their kind of short story as well as or better than the kind of short story that comes to a snappy Duco finish opposite the Standard Sanitary Plumbing ad on page 262 is small, but it is growing. And even in the popular magazines, where plot and situation and the final trick will, of course, never die out, we find a slightly increasing taste for the stories, so-called, of "character" and "atmosphere." Americans who read, as well as those who do not, like people, and they like people to be alive, and if they are given the real thing in aliveness, they won't ask for much else. And who, even among the great novelists, has given us so large a collection of live people as are to be found in Chekhov's short stories?

But Chekhov is still high up on our shelves, if indeed he is there at all. The American publishers of Mrs. Constance Garnett's translation (which will be standard for an indefinite period of years), find that the twelve-volume set trickles with appalling slowness from their store-rooms to our libraries, and they have even remaindered a portion of these sets to a cut-rate bookseller. The plays, as given by the Moscow Art Theater a few years ago, were wildly, if uncomprehendingly, applauded; intelligent articles about Chekhov appear from time to time; he could be approximately identified by most of the persons subjected to "Ask Me Another," but he is actually read, in the necessary long and enthusiastic draughts, only by a most miserable handful. He is accepted, though ignorantly and vaguely, as a "big man" in the literature of somewhere or other, but he is simply not current at all.

In Russia, he is now by all accounts worse than merely not current. A portraitist of things as they were, he is rejected by a country where everything is in the future; he is dismissed as a "bourgeois," God knows why, by people with whom the word is a fiery malediction; he is accused of being a reactionary, at the worst, and an indifferentist, at the best, by those who have not the mind to perceive the singular originality and humanity of his point of view and its value to him and to all other artists; he is neglected, suspect and thoroughly in eclipse. He is less honored even than in America, which is little enough.

He has acquired, with us, the unfortunate reputation, which he shares with many of his compatriots, of being "one of those dreary, depressing, sordid Russians." We can see how a superficial knowledge of him could produce such an impression. In most of his stories, from our red-blooded-national-weekly point of view, nothing happens. His characters have an annoying way of walking back and forth, up and down, from one end of the room to the other—a trick so frequent that it seems almost like a hall-mark. In "The Three Sisters," which was loyally and sensitively performed by Miss Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theater last season, an otherwise friendly audience began to titter at the characters' monotonous insistence that they were "so tired," that they had "such a headache," that they were "worn out." These trivial repetitions, when they begin to get on our nerves, sometimes have power to poison a whole book, a whole play, a whole literature, and Americans have always been peculiarly irritated by such traits in the Russians. But, at bottom, Chekhov is, like all great creators, profoundly un-depressing, un-sordid, un-dreary. No matter what manner of life, hopeless and gray, is depicted, the reality of the people, the beauty of the brief, sure strokes by which the characteristic is revealed and what is secret, inviolable, in each human unit is left unrevealed, are immensely stirring and exciting. "Babbitt," "Main Street" and, to a much greater degree, "Elmer Gantry," are far more depressing than Chekhov, because, through 99 percent of their bulk, they remain untouched by the magic wand of life. Yet their subjects, and the subjects of the majority of our present fiction, are the same subjects as those of Chekhov's stories: ordinary people in small towns, to whom nothing happens. In Chekhov, the "nothing" usually happens in an interesting way; with us, the record of the event is made doubly dull by the overweight of the author's certainty that the original was dull.

Chekhov's own life was like one of his own stories: nothing very much happened to him; and the main facts, which are themselves not the most important things about him, can be set down in a paragraph. The things about Chekhov that matter are much better looked for in his stories, in "Gusyev," in "The Ravine," in "The Duel," for instance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To a lesser degree, they will be found in his letters, which are almost the most attractive, charming, genuine letters in the history of literature. In what Chekhov created, and in what he unconsciously revealed of himself to others, we can find the traits that made him so different from anybody else. His friends and literary acquaintances have added something to that knowledge. They were uniformly aware of his rare gifts, as a person no less than as a writer, and they have recorded some clear and intimate glimpses; but one feels behind many of their recollections the consciousness that they were not doing their subject justice, that even the tenderest anecdotes, even the most warm and loving adjectives fail to catch one of the most elusive of men. I think there can be no question that Gorky, though he was far more awed and overwhelmed by Tolstoy, was much fonder of Chekhov as a man. But his short sketch of Tolstoy, the finest thing of its kind in the world, is very much more successful than his recollections of Chekhov, because Chekhov's less energetic, more secret talent and personality kept to themselves and defied portraiture, because Gorky felt too much the quiet greatness of the charm which was always a little ahead of the pursuing pen and never would be entirely captured.

In a recent book ("Anton Tchekhov, Literary and Theatrical Reminiscences": Doran. $6) Mr. S. S. Koteliansky has translated and edited many of the most interesting recollections of Chekhov by his contemporaries, together with an excellent chronological table and some extremely trifling "hitherto unpublished works" which might easily have been left to the obscurity intended for them. Here are fragments of Gorky again, a little bit soft, ever so little in the diluted vein of an editorial. Here are Bunin, Kuprin, Alexander Chekhov, Korolenko. Here is Soulerzhitsky, very ably and simply recording what other actors of the Moscow Art Theater had told him about Chekhov from time to time. And here once more is Tolstoy's afterword to "The Darling," very much like a sermon—or like the print of a gigantic thumb on a fine page.

Mr. Koteliansky has compiled a good little book, indeed an absorbing one for any member of the handful for whom Chekhov is more than a name. But it won't, we are sorry to say, make him any better known in America or any more read here. His extraordinary charm has been offered to us before, particularly in various translations and editions of his own letters, but the American fish didn't bite. They gobbled the plays (for a few weeks), but plays are different, and anyhow, it was Morris Gest who put the bait on that hook. They refuse the stories, or, more precisely, they have never come near them. The stories, we suppose, are sniffed at as Russian and lumped with Countesses, caviar, dagger-dancers and suicide. The contents might seem all right, for they are well suited to the American palate, but we are not likely to get much further than the label.

It would be so easy for some arch-Chekhovian, if he were at the same time a good literary craftsman, to spread out in front of him half-a-dozen of the famous stories about small-town Russians, to change the names, Americanize the dialogue (which is strongly English in Mrs. Garnett's translation), lay the scene in Oshkosh, Springfield, Fairview, or Maplehurst, and, leaving all the delicate marrow intact, sail into fame on the pure, if narrow waters of the "quality" magazines. . . . ROBERT LITTELL.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Poet and the Critic

SIR: I address myself not to the editorial godhead in its indivisible oneness, but to the portion incarnated recently by Mr. Edmund Wilson, whose "The Muses Out of Work" appeared in the issue of May 11.

Your taste in poetry seems to me admirable; which means, of course, that your likes and dislikes among the poets of the season are much the same as mine. In fact, I admire your natural taste all the more, since your reasoning, by which you go through the motions of fortifying your judgment, seems to me brutal and absurd. May I review your achievement? It is my thesis that you judge well of poetry without knowing why you judge, and that you invite the world to judge of poetry on grounds which are thoroughly insufficient.

You undertake to review the season's poetry according to a single consideration, which you phrase in several ways: Poetry must "have its roots in contemporary reality"; its theme must be important and contemporary; its tone must indicate that the poet "has a stake in society," leads "an interesting life," and has a successful "career" of which the poetry is strictly the by-product.

Permit me to observe that in hardly a single instance has this principle permitted you to make an esthetic judgment.

Certainly you do not apply it to Miss Millay's poetry. You prefer to ascribe her preëminence to a very different principle (which seems also to be highly dubious): "precisely to her mastery of the music of English verse." Your liking for her verse was in defiance of your doctrine, which she violated. Personally, I was astonished when I heard that the great American opera had at last come to pass with a libretto that harked clear back to the Anglo-Saxon; you must have been appalled, with your bias in favor of the Hotel Algonquin; but not sharing your bias, I did not have to share your embarrassment, and could honor "The King's Henchman" without damaging a pet theory. That you, too, honored it, under the circumstances, shows a magnanimity.

You do not seriously apply it to Mr. Robinson's "Tristram," which just as plainly is a poet's abnegation of the contemporary reality.

You are on the point of applying it to Mr. Hart Crane's "White Buildings," but again you save yourself; what you admire there you do not succeed in saying, but it is despite the fact that you remark the poet's lack of a satisfactory contemporary theme.

You seem to apply it with favorable results to Mr. Van Doren's "7 P. M.," forgetting that you have just now disqualified him with the stipulation that the "career" you have in mind for the poet must not include the career of an editor.

You do not apply it anywhere very thoroughly, and the fact is to your credit. It is a village schoolmaster's principle, and requires you to be presumptuous every time you apply it in an unfavorable sense, and you very decently prefer to be evasive for the most part, and let the principle go.

In opposition to your principle, I venture to submit a counter set of related propositions. Poetry is automatically and inevitably contemporary, and in reflecting the most actual and important experiences of the poet reflects indubitable contemporary data. Sometimes its comments upon these data are direct, and sometimes they are by way of indirection; and the latter case is not the less significant, though it is the more difficult for the critical analysis. The prime virtue of poetry as a contemporary docu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment is not its directness, in which it is greatly exceeded by prose, but its sincerity, in which it is reputed to have no equals. There is as much of the poet in a "King's Henchman" as in a "Figs from Thistles," and *vice versa*. It is impossible to find in the surface "theme" of a poem any index to the degree of the poet's emotional excitement, since any theme pursued far enough involves the poet's whole mind and all his experience. The "interest" which attaches to a poet's theme is fundamentally the poet's interest, and the single isolated critic is in no better position than the poet to determine whether this is a universal interest; that question must hang in the balance for the process of time to bring to an answer.

These propositions I cannot here contend for; they seem to me to be very nearly axiomatic for critical theory. The general doctrine might be called a Critical Positivism: it is deeply informed with the conviction that critics must renounce their *a priori* formulas and their *ex cathedra* manners. They must prepare themselves to admit that their formulas will never fully explain the poem, and will probably not even fully explain their judgment of the poem. . . .

JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

Nashville, Tennessee.

[Mr. Ransom has misunderstood me—perhaps I should have stated my position more explicitly. In the first place, I did not "undertake to review the season's poetry according to a single consideration"—that the poet should "have a stake in society," etc. This—like my remarks on "the music of English verse"—were not definitive critical principles, but merely reflections by the way. I am well aware that no set of critical formulas can ever succeed in explaining a poem, and I do not pretend that my own primary judgments as to what is good poetry or what is not are anything other than mysterious emotional responses. In any field, however, it is possible, and perhaps profitable, to speculate as to what makes some productions more satisfactory than others. As for the question of "a stake in society," I never either made such a statement or went upon such an assumption as Mr. Ransom takes for granted: I quite agree with him that the reality and the intensity of the experience which has gone to make a poem, and the excellence of the poem, are not at all to be measured by the contemporaneity of the subject or the form. I have no *a priori* objections to any sort of form or subject whatever—not even to the Arthurian legends. My contention was simply that the work of certain poets—among whom I did not include Mr. Robinson or Miss Millay—granting them whatever settings and puppets or whatever veins of imagery were congenial to their various temperaments, did not seem to proceed from a very deep or a very interesting experience. If I had meant what Mr. Ransom thinks I mean, I should scarcely have spoken with appreciation of Milton: Milton's personal emotional experience and his experience of the contemporary world both play prominent parts in his poetry, but the "surface theme" of Paradise Lost, for example, relating as it does to the Garden of Eden, is anything but contemporaneous.—E. W.]

Wanted—a T. R. B. for Japan

SIR: T. R. B. need not confine his attention to Washington to find humor in politics; if he would turn his attention to Tokyo now and then, his broad grin would turn into positive guffaws.

Baron Tanaka has just organized a new cabinet, but previous to its organization he held consultation with certain "elders" of his party in regard to the formal platform upon which his cabinet should stand at all costs. As stated in the public press, he has decided to come out absolutely and without the slightest equivocation, no matter what happens, in favor of the following platform:

1. Settlement of the China question.
2. Establishment of a definite industrial policy.
3. Settlement of the financial situation.
4. Establishment of definite guarantee for the security of judicial authority.

We, who live in the Empire, are very much pleased to find so fearless a man at the head of the government.

HAROLD J. NOBLE.

Seoul, Korea.

A Student Tour of Russia

SIR: Your readers will be interested to know of a movement of considerable significance which has been in progress in a great many colleges and universities throughout the country for the past few months. We are referring to the American Student Delegation of some one hundred members which will make a serious study of the Soviet experiment by traveling in Russia during this summer. The movement is being directed by the Student Council of New York, an association of the social problems clubs in the New York colleges.

Mr. William Davis, who left two months ago to make arrangements with the Central Students' Bureau of the U. S. S. R. for the reception of the delegation, has now returned to New York and reports excellent arrangements, both from the academic and material viewpoints.

The delegation will spend three weeks in Leningrad and Moscow and the remaining five weeks in the provinces, to get the real flavor of Russia. The delegation will choose for itself the factories and social institutions it wishes to inspect. The itineraries are planned with the purpose of permitting some specialization. There are five itineraries for specialized study; a group on education and one on agriculture will travel through the Ukraine, Crimea and White Russia, one on industry through the Urals, one on the status of racial minorities and political structure will go down the Volga River and through the Caucasus, and those studying the timely topic of Russian-Chinese relations will sweep across Siberia, spend a few weeks in China, if conditions permit, and return by way of the Pacific.

The purpose of the venture is threefold; to clarify our ideas of Russia by means of facts, to establish international good feeling by contact with Russia and Russian students, and to bring back authentic reports to our fellow students next fall.

COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN STUDENT DELEGATION TO RUSSIA.

New York City.

Criminal Syndicalism in California

SIR: In your issue of May 25, you quote the California Criminal Syndicalism Law, which defines the offense as "any doctrine or precept advocating, teaching or aiding and abetting the commission of sabotage or unlawful acts of force and violence," and declares every person guilty of a felony who "organizes any society, group or assemblage of persons to aid or abet" the above offense.

I wish to draw your attention to the recent act of a "group" of armed men who organized themselves for the purpose of destroying the aqueduct which supplies the city of Los Angeles, of a million inhabitants, with water. They not only organized for the purpose but actually succeeded in the crime, tearing out "a section of pipe 300 feet long."

If this act does not identically comply with the terms of the Criminal Syndicalism Act, then words have no meaning, and yet not even the American Legion is taking any steps to prosecute the offenders under the Act. It is a sheer farce to contemplate sending Miss Whitney to prison and neglecting the weightier matter of the law. Surely we Californians are "straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel."

EDGAR SUMMERTON.

Hayward, California.

[It is generally conceded that the dynamiters in question were not "Syndicalists," and that their action had no connection with any radical party, but was the outcome of a quarrel between the Water Bureau and some disaffected ranchers.—THE EDITORS.]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dragons in the Path

France and America, by André Tardieu. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 312 pages. $3.
France, by Sisley Huddleston. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 613 pages. $5.

M. TARDIEU, the distinguished former High Commissioner to the United States, calls his book "a critical essay in search of coming enlightenment" in international relations, and admits that his implied optimism is an act of faith. Mr. Huddleston, whose newspaper and magazine accounts of current French affairs are well known, does not undertake so directly the task of adjusting misunderstandings between friends. He tries to tell what France is, believing, perhaps, that truth has its own diplomatic value.

The differences between the French and the Americans are fundamental, obstinate, and beyond the reach of mere explanations. No one has ever stated them better than M. Tardieu, and at the end he is compelled to say, "The great day of political coöperation has not yet dawned. Any attempt to hasten events will be disastrous."

Why? Because one nation is young, mobile and expansive; the other old and stable. One has been blessed with a degree of isolation; the other takes every breath in the presence of watchful neighbors. One has been careless of nationality; the other has been conscious for centuries of *la Patrie*. One is a new mixture of races; in the other, the mixture has had time to cool. The huge proportions to which Americans are accustomed in the mechanics of life seem to Frenchmen fantastic and unnatural.

As democracies, says M. Tardieu, they are alike only in name. The Frenchman has fewer "rights" but more freedom. In American politics, economic questions prevail; French politics are merely political. (Mr. Huddleston says French politics are often merely trivial.)

Americans are assertive of their glory as the Chosen People, while Frenchmen—but no, M. Tardieu is scarcely naïve enough to make that antithesis absolute. He merely says in a fatherly way that our optimism and self-confidence are often bumptious.

After summarizing these differences, M. Tardieu shows how much better he is in diagnosis than in treatment. To tell Americans something about France, he offers a long fifty pages in which history and the making of the French "soul" are reduced to a distressing catalogue of names and allusions which might mean something to one who already knew all the author is trying to convey.

For concrete material, to show how national temperaments clash in action toward a common end, M. Tardieu digs into the story of American relief work in his country, both before and after we were actual participants in the War. Here he exemplifies in himself one of the mistakes in regard to America of which he elsewhere accuses his countrymen. "Indifference to collective action" is cited as an obstacle to the efforts of the invading American social workers, and one would suppose he could himself encompass both individual and collective points of view. But, instead of anything like an informing and comprehensive account of the relief work actually done, we are given an analysis, with reiterated names of members of early committees, of one phase only. That one phase was not the most important nor does its history show clearly the difference in methods and manners which the author wants to make clear. The Red Cross, one of the few "collective" agencies in the field, is mentioned only as a bogey of centralization. M. Tardieu comes near to saying that the small groups of American residents of Paris, who unquestionably did everything they could to help the French people whom they loved from long association, were more representative of American friendship and American character than larger organizations, such as the Red Cross, which were supported by almost universal interest and sacrifice at home.

Embedded in this rather myopic presentation of relief work, however, there is an explanation of the economics of reconstruction—one of the few concessions the book makes to our concern for this aspect of affairs. Probably no other section, excepting his initial attack on our blindness to deep national differences, is so much worth while as this brief statement of the way in which prices, and labor needs, and industrial reëstablishment, made difficult the seemingly simple job of getting peasants back on their land.

And after? M. Tardieu does not spare his own people. There may be something ironic in saying that France must be more assertive of her own excellence if Americans, who "love success," are to believe in her, but he lists and condemns numerous faults of which indifference to the public weal is the chief. We can listen with humility to his severe indictment of ourselves; he is trying hard to be fair. He really knows Americans better than any man of foreign birth and foreign career could reasonably be expected to know us. We may smile pensively at the statement that religion does not enter into our politics, or wonder just why there is such an alien air to calling Lincoln an "imperious genius," but it would be difficult to find in our own historical writing anything better, for instance, than his analysis of domestic politics which caused the Wilson *débâcle*.

Mr. Huddleston is not so consciously bi-national. But he is thoroughly immersed in his subject—so much so that his English is full of French echoes. As one of the curiously uneven series on "The Modern World" which H. A. L. Fisher is editing, his book is neither best nor worst. The first chapters, which betray the fact that they are not written by a trained historian, are obviously inferior to Gooch on Germany, or Toynbee on Turkey, and they are certainly not so provocative as the Dean of St. Paul's on England. Once he begins to move among events which he has himself observed, Mr. Huddleston's work becomes less jerky and repetitious in style and less almanac-like in the compilation of facts. A coherent and intelligible modern France emerges from the chapters "Between Two Wars." The picture of the parliamentary incompetents who exploit and betray the enthusiasms into which the "lucid" French so easily stumble is admirable. He makes understandable the spectacle of a thrifty, home-loving nation, without population pressure, becoming the second colonial power in the world. He shows how multiple and contradictory are the phases of public opinion even in a well knit country, and talks good sense about the question of war guilt. What Poincaré and other politicians at home and abroad were thinking or plotting are "interesting historical questions, but they are totally different from the question of whether the French as a people actively desired the War. They were not even expecting it, and on this point the verdict must be absolute."

For the most part, Mr. Huddleston is chary of generalizations which lead to any final thesis. But he is convinced of one important fact, that the youth of France are rebelliously taking charge and are building with the belief "that the future depends upon internal renovation, and the cultivation of friendships with foreign people, and the substitution of coöperation for competition."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would be comforting to believe that this shrewd and unsentimental observer was telling us the truth.

One comes back to M. Tardieu's balancing of qualities, however, because that suggests the larger and more philosophical question. Can nations of developed ideals ever hope for understanding when they come closely into contact? Can they do better than to accomplish in a hot glow of sentimental blindness any common purpose great enough to swing them into line—and retreat afterward in good-humored tolerance? Nobody knows the answer to those questions and few publicists even bother about them. M. Tardieu's service, a feat of reasonableness comparable to his achievement in executive statesmanship when he was High Commissioner, is to show us dragons in the path. Dragons, one might say, issuing from both caverns of nationality and facing both ways. LYMAN BRYSON.

Romanticism, Classicism, Realism

Romanticism, by Lascelles Abercrombie. New York: The Viking Press. 192 pages. $2.

THE definition of romanticism is an old battle-ground. Professor Abercrombie comes upon the field with material and equipment surpassing his predecessors, and it will be long before he is successfully challenged in his central position. One can but admire the firmness of his exposition, and the richness of his illustration, drawn with equal precision from Greek philosophers and English poets—often the least known. The discussion of Empedocles in the second lecture is itself a masterpiece.

Professor Abercrombie holds that romanticism is "a certain attitude of mind," of which the essential quality is that it is "a tendency away from actuality," "a withdrawal from outer experience in order to concentrate on inner experience." He finds the antithesis to romanticism in realism, that "general habit of mind which loves to go out into the world, and live confidently and busily in the stirring multitudes of external things." This is, of course, the familiar distinction between introversion and extroversion. The commonly expressed opposition between romanticism and classicism Professor Abercrombie finds meaningless, because, in his view, the terms are not of the same class. Classicism is not, like romanticism, an element of art, "but a mode of combining the elements," in which the world of inner experience is combined in its true proportion with the world of outer experience—or, to use the admirable glass which he offers in his preface, "the experience which a man seems to give himself" with "the experience which seems to be given to a man." Classicism represents "an equilibrium of forces." Since we are engaged on a matter of definition, it is proper to inquire whether this use of classicism is not unduly to restrict the term. Surely, concentration upon securing this equilibrium may be "a habit of mind." The equilibrium itself must be recognized as a combination which in its proportions is common to mankind, is typical, and therefore social. We need a word to express this tendency toward the normal, the socialized in art, from which the romanticist seeks to escape into his inner life. Classical is the term which, in recognition of the historical fact that by the Renaissance our culture was established on a basis afforded by the recovery of the monuments of Rome and Greece, has been accepted as the definition of this habit of mind, and it is not likely to be displaced unless a substitute can be found.

The definition of romanticism by reference to the inner life is one which few will question. It is true, the author is aware of the obvious difficulties of distinguishing between "inner" and "outer" experience, and admits quite frankly that he has ignored them. As it is impossible to conceive of an inner life entirely independent of something which by common consent we regard as external to it, and an object of general participation, so it is impossible to isolate the phenomena of each. Perhaps it is sufficient to consider as romantic all that tends to emphasize and aggrandize the consciousness of individual, imaginative experience. A romantic use of the external world is thus possible, and certain aspects of it, by such use, acquire the epithet romantic. Professor Abercrombie points out, among other fallacies, that of trying to define romanticism by reference to such aspects, as it were by topics. It is not to be denied, nevertheless, that certain topics form subjects of contemplation which have special efficacy in stimulating the inner life to which the romanticist escapes. Nature may be the object of scientific study, of realistic notation, of typical generalization, but its peculiar value in modern poetry consists in its power of awakening the individual consciousness to an intimate and personal sense of its own experience. Professor Abercrombie makes a valiant attempt to exclude Wordsworth from the list of romanticists, on the ground that in his pursuit of nature he was really an extrovert, that his object was "to *know*, with delighted kindling of his consciousness, the existence he really belongs to." The question for criticism is one of emphasis—whether Professor Abercrombie's italics should not, after all, be placed upon the phrase which he subordinates to a parenthesis. Undoubtedly, Wordsworth shows much of the close attention to detail that we expect in a realist; but Ruskin has marked the difference between the realism of Scott's view of nature, and Wordsworth's sense that nature could not get along very well without him.

The provocative quality of Professor Abercrombie's criticism extends to his final pages, in the discussion of the old definition of romanticism as a tendency toward freedom of form. Undoubtedly, this was a by-product of the opposition between romanticism and classicism which the author, by his new application of the latter term, seeks to avoid. If classicism or any other term be used to describe that tendency to limit the field of art to such matter of experience, in sensation or thought, as may be recognized as typical, normal, social, the same term will be applied to forms, likewise limited, and approved by their fitness to the subject matter; and to such a term romanticism, which must tend to find a new form for each individual utterance, will be in antithesis. Professor Abercrombie's explanation of the analytic quality of modern forms of literature, which permits great variety of method in accomplishing a fixed design of structural unity, is admirable, but certain subsidiary attempts to show a congruity between the romantic spirit and prescribed form, suggest special pleading. The effort to express the inner life in painting, by imposing abstract geometrical form upon the common stuff of visual experience, as in cubism, may represent a permanent tendency; but to associate with this effort the prescribed form of poetry in Provençe, "the paradise of romance," is certainly far-fetched. Provençal poetry took its form from social requirements, and in so far was assuredly not romantic, though, as in the sonnet, it became a vehicle for romantic, or pseudo-romantic, emotion. Such skirmishing, however, should not give even the appearance of detracting from the essential soundness and value of Professor Abercrombie's book. ROBERT MORSS LOVETT.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The High Cost of Distribution

The Distribution Age, by Ralph Borsodi. New York: D. Appleton and Company. 321 pages. $3.

OF one dollar paid for bread today, fifty-four cents goes into distribution costs; for beef the amount so paid is thirty-three cents; for corn flakes the amount is sixty-seven cents.

Facts like these are gradually bringing the problem of the high cost of distribution before the American public. So much has been heard about the lowered costs of production due to standardized mass production that everyone is beginning to wonder why the consumer's price has not fallen in anything like a relative ratio. The crux of the difficulty, says Mr. Borsodi, is the bungling and unscientific handling of the distribution of goods. He thus joins the growing band of analysts who are making the country consumer-conscious. His discussion is all of a piece with that of E. A. Filene, Paul M. Mazur, Stuart Chase, Percival White, Kenneth Goode, and others who from their several special angles are all shouting in the wilderness of consumption that the way of salvation is at hand—somewhere in the distributive mechanism!

The unique element in Mr. Borsodi's diagnosis is the breadth of its economic view and its recognition of the complex issues at stake. It is not a panacea book. Rather is it a laying out of the several factors in distribution which have each to be worked on if these costs are to fall. The major emphasis is, however, upon the high-pressure selling induced, and even required, under present conditions by large-scale production. "It is not good for the community," says the able secretary of the National Retail Dry Goods Association, in his introduction indorsing the study, "to have the independent retailer changed into the puppet of the nationally advertising manufacturer."

Essentially, the contribution of this author (which is supported by Mr. Mazur's thoughtful "Principles of Organization Applied to Modern Retailing") is the new role of the retailer. The retailer must become or remain the real mouthpiece of the consumers. He must ascertain what they will absorb, when, how much, and at what price. Market analysis, instead of being merely a supplementary service performed for the manufacturer by the advertising agency, must become an integral part of the job of retailing. Making what is wanted rather than selling, willy-nilly, what is being poured out of the machines, is the new approach to a sensible integration of production and consumption.

To the consumer, Mr. Borsodi offers this advice: Don't buy branded goods when equally good articles are available for less money; try to buy on a basis of real specifications of grade, style, and price. These are counsels which Mr. Stuart Chase is also trying to popularize. What can be achieved in this direction in the face of the deafening shouts of the national advertisers for their special brands remains to be seen. But certainly some more concrete method of conscious enlightenment and action has to be secured to provide a real offset to the whole trade-marked-packaged-advertised-article campaigns.

The author's other objective is the lowering of prices, coupled with increased higher cash incomes for the great mass of people, and also with an increasing ratio of consumption to capital goods expenditure. This proposal has familiar aspects in all three of its parts. To the reviewer, the author seems on least clear and least prophetic ground when he tries, in the fine old Jeffersonian tradition, to restore competition as a price-lowering measure. How it can be done is not shown from any of its complex angles. Surely the legal attack on monopoly has proved a joke. The moral attack is of no avail against economic forces. And the economic fact is that the capital outlay required to develop competitive plants is, in many industries, overwhelming—and it seems to be true today of many industries that capital equipment of a presumably competitive character is already seriously over-developed, as Secretaries Hoover and Davis have been showing in public utterances these last several years. Clearly, the way of the prospective new competitor is hard—and worse still, it is, scientifically viewed, fatuous!

The proposal of higher cash incomes is wise and sane; but, broadly speaking, it requires strong group organization within the rank and file to force a higher wage level.

The problem of equating income and purchasing power and of directing savings into consumer rather than producer use has been popularized by Foster and Catchings. But how to do it and where to begin doing it are still obscure points to every economist. What Mr. Borsodi proposes as a channel into which the wealthy can divert some of their otherwise to-be-reinvested capital is more patronage of the arts.

This author, therefore, no more than any other critic of our sundry economic maladjustments, can hand the reader a key to fit smoothly into the lock. Yet so unaware are many of us of the present shift in the character of our ills from the problem of making goods to that of passing them around in some sensible fashion that this book should prove valuable to the public. It should help to dispel the stultifying and obstructive notion that, as each business man follows his own interests in an ever-so-enlightened way, the purposes of the common good are in some mystical manner being served. This book is one of the few which realize that this is not true. The author is aware of the necessity for a new view of economic purpose. He says, in effect, that there is needed a deliberate effort at the formulation of new purposes which will integrate the conflicting desires of people in their capacities as producers, distributors, and consumers, and thus enable them to make their conflicts serve constructive ends in efficiently organized functional institutions.

ORDWAY TEAD.

The "Top Talker"

Colonel Bob Ingersoll, by Cameron Rogers. New York: Doubleday Page and Company. 293 pages. $3.

A GENERATION too young to have heard and seen him will never thoroughly appreciate Ingersoll. He was an eminent lawyer, a gallant soldier, a shrewd Republican, a first-rate friend, a defender of the poor, a lovable, twelve-cylindered, eupeptic red-blooded son of the West—none of which necessarily makes a man interesting to posterity. He was also an unbeliever of singular success and ferocity, who tripped up the orthodox harder and oftener than anyone else in this country since Tom Paine. For that, we bitterly envy his generation: we have no unbeliever of his caliber, and the score seems to be more and more in favor of the other side. But Ingersoll's chief claim to fame and glory, at any rate in the opinion of those who witnessed it, was his miraculous gift of speech. He was a genuine, natural-born, silver-tongued orator. He could move juries, hard-boiled Confederate soldiers, towns, states, audiences of any kind anywhere, to tears or to any other emotion, but, being of that type as rare as the benevolent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

despot—the good demagogue—he used his enormous power wisely. His head was a good one, clear and simple and quick, but compared with his tongue it was only an average head, for Ingersoll was "the top-talker of the whole damned outfit."

Only the highest skill can recapture in written words the sheer physical splendor of such a gift. It simply can't be put into print. Lacking the magnetic presence of the man himself and of his occasion, quotations from even his most famous speeches are often, like any other cold boiled eloquence, slightly distasteful. As a lawyer—aside from this eloquence—Ingersoll seems to have been honest, flamboyant, prosperous, but not really striking. His Civil War record, his political activity, everything he did—barring one thing—that did not depend upon his magic eloquence, is hardly worth writing about. The exception, and the trait that made him as remarkable in his own age as it should make him interesting to ours, was his heresy, his unwavering defiance of myth, dogma, established belief and religion in any form. Ingersoll's personal charm, his eloquence, his courage and his reputation for success, made him an exceedingly uncomfortable antagonist to do battle with, but the battles of those days were real battles, they stirred up real hates and loyalties, and the proof of their reality lies in the fact that today the greater part of them need to be fought all over again. It is this aspect of Ingersoll that chiefly interests us today, and it is upon this side of him, together with the background of the forces against which he fought, that a biography would do best to focus.

But Mr. Rogers' biography doesn't focus anywhere in particular. While he devotes a great deal of space, proportionately, to Ingersoll as a youngster, as a soldier, as a lawyer, these pages have the list of a clumsily loaded ship rather than the focus of portraiture. The extreme and miscellaneous poverty of his account of Ingersoll's raids upon the Church, superstition, mythology, creeds, Moses and the Old Testament are not so much the result of design as of sheer incapacity. He thinks well of such words as "ilk," "parlance" and "apace," writes "opine" for think, "behold" for see, "slew" for kill, "query" for ask, "potent" for strong, "malady" for illness, and "quotha" for no reason at all. He begins the narrative with an imaginary close-up (in the leisurely precious manner), of little Robin Ingersoll and Wulp, a toy bear; he abandons this fastidious method very quickly in favor of something more like downright compilation, flavored with a familiarity (a ceaseless calling of Ingersoll "Bob" and Whitman "Walt") which is not far from trespass; by the end he has completely surrendered, and winds up with a regular snowstorm of old-fashioned testimonial letters, quoted date, Esq., Yours truly, watermark and all, just as if Robert G. Ingersoll were a patent cough medicine.

No book about Ingersoll could be totally devoid of interest, and, irritating as it is, this one does give us many revealing glimpses of his extraordinary figure, and quotations from speeches, letters (but usually speeches), which show us all sides of him. Here are fragments of his youth, explaining so much of the man: John Ingersoll, that honest, rock-ribbed Puritan, who "believed the Bible," says his son, and passed his life "in the shadow of that frightful book"; old John Ingersoll, in his last hour demanding not the Bible, but Plato. Here is Ingersoll the free-thinker speaking, in 1869, of the South as "the most bloodthirsty anarchy," and the North as the "best government in the world," and in 1876 of the "sacred standard of the Republican party." Here is Ingersoll the Bible-slayer at his best, skilfully defending Tom Paine with one hand while he exposes the Old Testament with the other. Here is Ingersoll, temperance advocate and poet—at moments a genuine poet, though always too public a one—chanting about "the wrecks upon either bank of the stream of death"—wrecks produced by alcohol; here he is again, praising whiskey in words fit to be carved in brass. Here he is in the tribune, Patrick Henry, toga and all, boasting that he "would not smother one sentiment of his heart to be the emperor of the round globe." Here he is after his brother's death, sing-song, panegyrical on the topmost ridge-pole of the hot-house of rhetoric, improvising as if from memory: "This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock; but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights, and left all superstitions far below, while on his forehead fell the dawning of a grander day. He loved the beautiful . . ."

And here he is cursing his foster-mother, New England, with half-affectionate, half-desperate denunciation, and hanging about her a red-hot necklace of adjectives which show all sides of him as well as of her—his shrewdness, his basic human tolerance and common sense, his prodigious lust for righteous battle, his saddened hatred of what he thought to be wrong, his strength, his joy, his anger, his fever of high health, his irresistible full-lipped pulpy eloquence, his streak of Lincoln and his streak of Elbert Hubbard.

R. L.

Unfused Allegory

The Marionette, by Edwin Muir. New York: The Viking Press. $1.75.

THE Marionette" is Edwin Muir's first novel. Since he made his debut, about ten years ago, with a little book of aphorisms—the fruit of his reading of Nietzsche—he has been writing brilliantly on contemporary literature. His reputation as a critic is now solid. He has shown that he has a number of things to say about literature and can say them with clarity and force. Unfortunately, "The Marionette" indicates that he has not yet anything to say at first hand about life.

For his novel, Mr. Muir has fallen back on a timid allegory of a half-wit boy and his dreams. Hans is a feeble-minded boy in the town of Salzburg, whose only interest is in his dolls, and who trusts no one except his old nurse, Emma. On his fourteenth birthday, his father, Martin, who has hitherto been ashamed of him, decides to try to draw him out of his witless imaginings. To interest him gradually in life, he makes use of the boy's interest in dolls, and takes him first to the marionette show, hoping to lead him through marionettes to people. But the result is just the opposite: the marionettes become more real to Hans than the inhabitants of Salzburg. He constructs a world for them, first in his dreams and soon in his day-dreams. He learns to know them individually, is absorbed in their affairs and resentful when any reminder of his actual life intrudes. Presently he tries to enter this world he has created and live in it himself. Although he has had no experience of love in life, he is loved in the marionette world by Gretchen. And this is the beginning of disaster. When his father brings him the marionette which has served as Gretchen, and Hans finds that it will not walk as it did on the stage and in his dreams, his disillusionment is inevitable. When he tears off its costume and sees that it is only a wooden doll, he smashes it on his bed and drives a nail in its breast. After this, his mind is feebler than before.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But he abandons his dolls and takes to digging in the garden. His father gives up the idea of changing him. And his old nurse Emma, from whom he has been estranged during his interest in the marionettes, is glad. She feels that she has won him back.

It is quite easy to read a Nietzschean meaning into this fable. Each of us constructs fictions about the world and tries to live as if they were real. Usually we call them ideals, and as often as not they are the result of well intentioned but ignorant efforts at improvement. Like Hans, we are resentful when they are shown up, and, as in his case, they are predestined to bring grief and enfeeblement of the mind. It is possible that the author intended Hans to be each of us, or our imagination; Emma to be nature; the father, our rational attempt to deal with the irrational principle of life. . . . But if this significance can be read into the story, it may be asked why I have said above that Mr. Muir had nothing to say. The reader need only sample the book to find out. It is w and sincerely, but the words are tasteless. They have none of the vibrancy and intensity of words born from realization. And the difference is the same as that between a piece of copper wire lying on the ground and the humming wires overhead through which the current is passing. Mr. Muir has read and thought about the ideas suggested by "The Marionette," yet the substance of his book remains a shrinking from their implications. It is evident that they have been a part of his intellectual experience but not of that complete experience which gives birth to imaginative prose. As a consequence, the book is thin and unfocussed; in a word, it is still-born.

LAWRENCE S. MORRIS.

F. M. Ford's Poems

New Poems, by Ford Madox Ford. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 38 pages.

IT is the distinction of the house of William Edwin Rudge to make beautiful books. In the poems of Ford Madox Ford the printer has found material worthy of his metal—craftsman has met craftsman and the joy of the reader waxes accordingly and multiplies. These thirty-eight handsome pages contain—the dedication apart—only half a dozen poems, whereof one is a translation. A slight offering, truly. They are called "New Poems," but some of us have remembered, these several years, the first and most substantial piece, "A House," from the time when it was originally printed in an American poetry journal. Slight or not, new or old, the contents of this little book are cause for rejoicing among all lovers of fine verse. With a simplicity of diction that seems as spontaneous as it is sturdy, with a cadence that has the flow and break of colloquial speech and withal the silver timbre of poetry, with a fullness of emotional strength that makes the reading of it an experience to be remembered over a period of years, the poem, "A House," is sufficient to dignify and grace even so slim a volume. The other pieces are small but perfect, each after its own kind, and the love lyrics among them have the unusual quality of touching the heart. All of them carry atmosphere as pungent as camphor, as sweet as sandalwood. And all of them ring with plaesant rhymes like so many belfries of a Sunday. The only one to which the reviewer would take exception is that which Englishes "Auprès de ma Blonde": the inimitable swing of the original is not quite captured, and something of its salt is lost. But in his own work, Ford Madox Ford has wrought with a beautiful wisdom and a durable charm.

B. D.

Vagabondia

The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound. New York: Boni and Liveright. 231 pages. $3.50.

IF Mr. Ezra Pound has, on the whole, received far less attention from contemporary criticism than he deserves, that is partly his own fault: he has been so extraordinarily mercurial a figure, has successively presented for inspection so many facets, that one has never been quite sure where to have him. One imagines him, at the outset of his career, to have been a pretty romantic young man—a romantic rebel (which to a considerable extent he still is) with nostalgic longings for something a good deal more distant, both in time and space, than the United States. Perhaps it was for this reason that the first literary influence to which he heavily succumbed was that of Hovey and Carman and the "Songs from Vagabondia." Has he ever recovered from that influence? One wonders. The Vagabondia motif shines continuously through all of his career: in space, it has led him to London, to Paris, to Avignon, to Rapallo; in time, it has led him to Propertius and Catullus and Li Po and Rihaku and the Provençal poets. He has, always, the air of a man on the point of departure. His hat is in his hand, and he is off to some place remoter still; he has acquired a smattering of odd and colorful phrases, in a strange tongue, which will find him his way about that far country; he assures us that this time he will at last discover the golden secret, the wisdom of wisdoms; but we know that this new country will only serve as the threshold to the next.

This is perhaps a clumsy way of saying that the work of Mr. Pound, now collected, strikes one as being curiously without a center. Who and what and where, in this extraordinarily able and diversified volume of verse, is Mr. Pound? What is his identity? What is his own peculiar attitude toward this terrifying world? He seems, indeed, to have none; and one cannot help feeling that the lack is very serious. Perhaps not, however: for Mr. Pound seems to tell us, obliquely, that after all there is nothing easier than this affair of an "attitude toward the world," that no new one of any importance is at all possible, and that therefore it is better to play, idly and ironically, with the attitudes of others. Apart from a handful of satirical poems, in which he makes amusing fun of contemporary manners, he has nothing to say of his own day and age; he prefers to try on, one after another, the styles of the ancients; and it must be admitted that he often does this very spiritedly. Can one not—he says in effect—make a poetry of poetry, a literature of literature? If one's consciousness, nowadays, is so much (granted that one is literary) a consciousness of the literature of the past, shouldn't *this,* then, this grab-bag of literary smatterings, be precisely one's own unique attitude —an attitude of attitudes? Well, why not? Mr. Pound makes an extremely entertaining, and often beautiful, though almost always artificial, thing of it. He is a good craftsman—Mr. Eliot goes so far as to call him *"il miglior fabbro";* he turns things with a coldly conscious nicety; and yet at the end one feels cheated, one feels that Mr. Pound has withheld the one thing that one above all wants. Isn't literature, after all, something more than this mere playing of a game, this sciolistic juggling with odds and oddments of erudition? One is amused, no doubt, by such curiosities of poetry as the empress Athenais' attempt to narrate the life of Christ wholly in terms of quotations from the Iliad: and what Mr. Eliot could do in this *cento* form we have seen and admired in "The Waste Land." But Mr. Eliot

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave us the something more, whether or not he intended to do so: he betrayed, perhaps unconsciously, an attitude of his own; and this, in Mr. Pound's collected poems, as also in his cantos, we miss.

Nevertheless, Mr. Pound's verse remains extraordinarily interesting to anyone for whom poetic technique is interesting. Unable to achieve a perfect poem or to give us, identifiably, himself, he has none the less been one of the most suggestive and influential of contemporary poets. It is his misfortune that his many discoveries and inventions, in tone and color and rhythm, have been more useful to his rivals and successors than to himself. Mr. Waley went him several better in his translations of Chinese poetry, the Imagists despoiled him of his imagism and outstripped him, and Mr. Eliot, adapting the *cento* to his own needs, made something far finer of it than Mr. Pound has succeeded in doing. Mr. Pound, however, has always been generous: and one imagines that this will not distress him in the least. He probably has something else up his sleeve. Just as we have successfully labeled him—domesticated him in Vagabondia—he will perhaps surprise us by again moving on. Who knows? He may even come home. CONRAD AIKEN.

Four O'Clock, by Mary Borden. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company. $2.50.

FOUR o'clock might conceivably symbolize the hour of crisis which arrives, now unobtrusively, now with a high sense of melodrama, in each one of these ten stories. Frustration and irony are the two notes which Mary Borden has attempted to strike, but an impression of brilliant superficiality is what she really achieves. Several of her tales concerning gallant and unhappy ladies are worthy of Michael Arlen in his Mayfair mood. Others are more arresting. The delicate grotesque horror of "To Meet Jesus Christ" is a triumph in virtuosity, as is the story of a young man who fell in love with a Pirandello character. Only two stories, however, have the real ring of sincerity—"Beauty" and "The Little Horse." One feels that Mary Borden has played tricks with her unusually accomplished style and her flair for drama. She has produced a book of short stories which are undeniably civilized but which fall far short of her former achievements in "Jane—Our Stranger." E. H. W.

Contributors

SISLEY HUDDLESTON, Paris correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor, is the author of "France and the French," "Those Europeans," and other books.

LÉONIE ADAMS is the author of a book of poetry, "Those Not Elect."

WITTER BYNNER [illegible]f "The Beloved Stranger," "A Canticle of Pan," "Pins for Wings," and other books of poems and plays.

HAMILTON BASSO is a native of New Orleans. He has published fiction in the New Masses, and is at work upon a novel.

LYMAN BRYSON, after a number of years abroad spent in international relief work, is now living in California.

ORDWAY TEAD is a member of the Department of Industry of the New York School of Social Work, and is the author of "Personnel Administration" and other books dealing with industrial management.

LAWRENCE S. MORRIS contributes stories, sketches and reviews to current periodicals.

CONRAD AIKEN is the author of "Scepticisms," "Bring! Bring!" a book of short stories, and of several volumes of verse.

SUMMER RESORTS

RIVERLAKE LODGE
A Camp Superb for Adults
at Kingston, N. Y. on the Hudson River and Lake Esopus.
A beautiful place with wonderful views of the Hudson River and mountains, where intelligent people will meet congenial company. Bathing, Boating, Fishing, Tennis, Hand Ball, Dancing and other amusements. Excellent Food. Terms: $35.00 weekly, $7.00 a day.
Special July 4th week-end
Camp sites and Furnished Rooms or Bungalows by the season. Write for camp booklet.
Riverlake Lodge—70 West 40th Street
N. Y. Tel. Longacre 3693.
Directors:
HARRY WEINBERGER HARRY KELLY

SUMMER RESORTS

TIMBERLAND
In the Heart of the Adirondacks
POTTERSVILLE, N. Y.
The Camp Purposely Limited to Congenial Group of 40
Bungalows and Main House modern in every respect.
Excellent facilities for all camp sports—also golf.
Rate $27.00 per week.
Morris Harkavy
Esther R. Kaplan
N. Y. office, 55 West 42 St
Pennsylvania 7663

SCONSET SCHOOL OF OPINION SCONSET MASSACHUSETTS
A SUMMER VACATION
By the Sea
With writers, editors, artists, scientists, musicians, educators. Bathing, golf, tennis, sailing. Rates moderate. References.

SCUDDER MIDDLETON
Author of "Streets and Faces" and "The New Day,"
is acclaimed by Contemporary Verse as "one of the finest and most neglected of first-rate American poets."
UPPER NIGHT
is his new book of Poetry. "Authentic poetry. Among the best things of the season." The New Republic $2.00.
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
One Park Avenue New York

MT. AIRY IS NOT A CAMP BUT A COMMUNITY
where artists and radicals teach children, write books, compose music and do other worthwhile things all the year through. It has a school that is "different," a brook, beautiful woods and many fine views of the Hudson, to say nothing of such things as running water, electric light and telephones. It adjoins the village of Croton-on-Hudson, but has the advantage of privacy where a new form of social life can daily. Special inducements for those with children.
Enquire Harry Kelly, 70 Fifth Ave., Tel. Chelsea 0432.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED